

The background of the cover features a stylized illustration of classical architecture. On the left, a large column is partially visible. In the upper left corner, there are two theater masks (comedy and tragedy) integrated into the column's capital. Several other columns are visible in the background, receding into the distance.

FIRST STAGE

A QUARTERLY OF NEW DRAMA

For the Young American Playwright

. Harold Clurman

Three Plays:

The Acrobats

Berry Fleming

The Chorus Girl

John A. Stone

Witches' Sabbath

Harry Granick

Volume I, No. 1

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Winter, 1961-62

Published at Purdue University

FIRST STAGE

A Quarterly of New Drama

**Purdue University
324 Heavilon Hall
Lafayette, Indiana**

FIRST STAGE attempts to serve these purposes: to offer plays of outstanding quality that have not appeared in print or that have not been produced professionally; to bring to the attention of the producers of the American and foreign theaters playwrights and plays that will enrich the living repertory of drama; to encourage a free exchange of ideas, comments and criticism on the problems and offerings of the contemporary theater.

Playwrights are invited to submit their work to FIRST STAGE. All manuscripts must be written for the stage and not for any other medium. Manuscripts must be typed in legible copy, must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope, and must be copyrighted in the author's name.

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FIRST STAGE and the Playwright

FIRST STAGE will attempt to bring new life to the contemporary theater by discovering new plays and gifted playwrights. The editors believe that talented but unknown playwrights are writing today and that given the necessary outlets they will be found. No theater can grow without a continuing repertory of new plays and a reserve of new writing talent. Without these, the theater shows an increasing tendency to resurrect the mediocre and bad plays of the past generation and to offer more and more musical entertainment to fill the vacuum left by legitimate drama. The drama can thrive only on a continuing tradition such as characterizes the growth of the novel and the short story. Every practicing craftsman needs to know what work is being done by his contemporaries—that is, the experimental as well as the conventional, the daring failures as well as the marketable successes, the serious as well as the slick. Imagine the loss to the novelist if only commercially successful works were available to him.

Every creative writer must maintain constant rapport with his society; that rapport is necessary to him as artist and as human being. The artist who is not in constant touch with his culture works in a vacuum. Like Kafka's Hunger Artist he finds that, though he may be performing spectacular feats of his craft, he gradually ceases to care about his amazing experiments, for he cannot simultaneously be creator and audience, writer and critic, speaker and listener. The chief danger is that the habit of not caring insinuates itself into the process of creation without his realizing it. As a result, a decline of potential is inevitable and, in our success-dominated era, total. Such a cultural impasse may, eventually, provide the basis for a vigorous, major talent to emerge—a talent that creates out of the very alienation thrust upon it by its culture; but, paradoxically, that talent would have to find an accessible living theater in order to thrive. So far only one serious avant-garde theater has emerged in America—the Living Theater in New York. But this theater offers few new plays and has had little affect upon the culture, for such a theater must take on the dimensions of a theatrical movement, include a large num-

ber of new plays and playwrights, before it can begin to make its mark upon the contemporary theater. Meanwhile, the dramatist who wishes to experiment must continue to do so in the abstract and experiments in the abstract eventually prove futile.

Although the new dramatist cannot find a living theater on the stage itself, he can find the semblance of one in FIRST STAGE. The publication of his plays can offer him some important features of a healthy human situation: an audience, a sense of being in touch with his culture, and the possibility that his work will eventually find its way to the stage. Until now, dramatic publication has been limited to works produced in the commercial theater. By the time a successful play reaches the public in print, it has already been established in the public mind as a hit by a famous director, a vehicle for a well-known actor or actress, or simply that play which the critics raved about; therefore it becomes impossible for the average reader to approach the play as a fresh experience. Thus mediocre drama often looks like great drama to the public at large.

FIRST STAGE also wants to help reestablish a nearly forgotten fact—that a play is a work of dramatic literature as well as a show. As a show, a play is vulnerable to doctoring that aims at making it a pleasant experience in the theater; as dramatic literature it is the work of one creative imagination and therefore demands that an integrity true to the spirit and conception of its creator be maintained. The editors hope that the publication of new plays will encourage respect for the dramatist's original text and discourage the present practice of assuming that a play is merely an outline or the raw material for a show and therefore fair game for any skilled veteran, be he director, actor or writer, to reshape it. The more a play is capable of being shaped and reshaped by many hands, the less possibility there is that it has a unique concept of human experience. If the play does, to begin with, have such uniqueness, the greater is the probability that reshaping will damage its integrity and the play will fail as a show and as a work of dramatic literature. The most impressive dramatists of our time—Shaw,

O'Neill, Brecht and Sartre—have opposed the intrusion of other hands in the shaping of their work for the stage. In his essay "Individualism and Conformism in the United States," Sartre expresses his reluctance to have his plays produced in America because producers habitually change texts submitted to them. Some critics felt that *THE ICEMAN COMETH*, for instance, should have been ruthlessly cut, but the play's integrity was maintained and, despite its initial failure on Broadway, it proved to be a work of considerable stature. Had it been doctored, it might have proved to be a shorter and slicker show, but a less impressive work of dramatic literature. Shakespeare was "doctored" and "improved" by dramatists, actors, and stage managers to make his tragedies more pleasant for seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century audiences. Fortunately for us, the plays in their original form remain to be read and produced. Had they survived in their "doctored" or "improved" versions, we would have lost a significant portion of our valuable heritage of dramatic literature. The actor's, director's and technician's job is not to change the life and content of the play, but to translate it into vital scene, speech and gesture upon the stage. If the play lives on the page, it will live on the stage.

In determining what lives on the page, the editors of *FIRST STAGE* are confronted by the same problem as the producer looking for a good play: What is a good play? How can one determine a good play before it is mounted on the stage? The editor, of course, has a great advantage over the producer: his decision does not involve the amassing of thousands of dollars, of thousands of hours of work and planning by hundreds of people—all of which may dissolve to nothing on opening night. The editor and reader have the rare privilege of considering a play on its merit as a genuine work of drama—in terms of its literary value and its vitality of speech and gesture in recreating human life—and not worrying about the inevitable difficulties which plague commercial productions.

The producer is limited by a number of other factors which seriously inhibit his choice of good plays. Chief of these is public taste and temper. Popular tastes create money-making markets but not great works of art. Every generation has its own subjective criteria for successful plays, good plays

and bad plays. The taste of the age seldom establishes the final judgment of a work of art. A brief survey of past successes in the theater will very soon disabuse anyone of the notion that public acclaim necessarily goes to the work of the first rank. It is the generations that follow that finally determine those works which we call great. Therefore every authentic work of drama deserves the right to be considered and enjoyed by succeeding generations. Such a right is granted to the printed play.

In printed form, a play may be read and reread; the play of the first rank enriches second readings and second thoughts. As seen on the stage, a play does not allow for second readings and second thoughts. Often the personality of the actor or the brilliance of the director overshadows the substance and quality of the play itself. Except when viewing established classics, none but the highly trained can tell where the play fails and the actor or director succeeds, or where the play succeeds but the actor or director fails to realize what is there.

It is the conviction of the editors of *FIRST STAGE* that all good drama possesses unmistakable signs of vitality, authenticity and originality. The editors must have the wit to perceive these qualities. At the heart of every vital play is a compelling desire for change—a change in the human condition, a yearning for cosmic order, a profound compassion to see men happier, saner, free of evil and suffering. This desire is not, necessarily, made explicit in the play but often operates as part of the intensity of feeling and relentless probing of the mind and heart which radiate through the play. This vitality may express itself despite faulty structure and clumsy dialogue.

Every genuine work of drama is also a personal commitment—to a view of life, to a feeling about human beings, to a political, social or philosophical insight or simply to a very personal posture toward the world. The editors will not be biased in favor of any given conventional or unconventional, traditional or avant-garde point of view. The important quality is the authenticity of the work. Although sincerity and honesty are necessary to the recreation of any experience, authenticity is more important. There have been good and bad, serious and slick plays sincerely and honestly written: the attitude in *THE SILVER CORD* is probably as honest as that in

MOTHER COURAGE, but the human experience—the attempt of a mother to exert a dominating influence over the lives of her children—is not authentically explored in *THE SILVER CORD*, whereas that in *MOTHER COURAGE* is compellingly so; therefore *MOTHER COURAGE* is a work of the first rank and *THE SILVER CORD* is second-rate. However, Brecht's commitments, for example, are no more valid per se than Shaw's or Pirandello's. All three are incisive, vital and authentic in their treatment of human experience, though the personal posture of each is quite different: Shaw's socialist optimism is as valid as Brecht's violent and ironic radicalism or as Pirandello's philosophical relativism. What they had in common was the genius to recreate their worlds in terms true to their vision and make us believe in their conceptions of humanity. Through speech and gesture they articulated what all great artists try to articulate: what it means to be a human being.

Finally, the editors of *FIRST STAGE* are looking for original drama. Every good play has some mark of originality—originality of idea, of approach to familiar plot or character, of exploration of new or old experience, of daring in its use of the stage, of its handling of dramatic structure, of its language and tone, or simply of its penetrating treatment of character and situation. The original dramatist risks his individuality as human being, artist, and thinker. For this reason, the failures in original drama are

often more interesting than the successes among the slick. What we call the slick play—the play which may be skilful in its dialogue, scene, action and plot—often skates swiftly and deftly among topical ideas and feelings, leans heavily on popular psychology and pre-fabricated images. Such plays exploit public sentiment rather than individual feeling and insight. They lack daring, vital personal commitment. It is inevitable, therefore, that such a play, to succeeding generations, appears thin, flat and banal. At best such a play might enjoy the continuing popularity of a funny vaudeville routine; *CHARLEY'S AUNT* is a typical example. The slick play is capable of being polished and repolished by any skilled veteran available. By its very nature, then, the slick play is apt to gain access to the stage whereas the serious play, the play of personal and possibly controversial commitment, languishes on the writer's or his agent's shelf. Therefore, the editors of *FIRST STAGE* are more interested in the serious play than in the slick play.

If *FIRST STAGE* should discover one dramatist or one play of the first rank that would otherwise be lost to obscurity, it will have performed its proper function. In an age dominated by big money, big productions and big personalities, respect for the unknown dramatist or drama seems archaic, but the editors believe that such respect is essential to the healthy growth of our theater.

Henry F. Salerno

DRAMA FORUM

Besides the new full length and short plays, FIRST STAGE also plans to publish in each issue short essays and letters on the state of drama and theater today. To maintain a sort of continuing forum on the drama, the editors will solicit contributions from well-known critics, playwrights and commentators upon the theatrical scene, and from the magazine contributors as well. Unsolicited letters from readers will be considered for publication as long as they deal with various problems of today's stage and its plays. The editors hope that the various contributors will thus carry on a continuous discussion from issue to issue about serious dramatic and theatrical matters, a discussion which will benefit us all. The editors may, from time to time, join in these forum discussions.

For the Young American Playwright

by
Harold Clurman

Nothing is more futile for the playwright than to seek trends in the theatre. A playwright, if he is at all talented or even canny, will be aware of the social tone of his community. If he is an artist he will have absorbed the feel of his time and place so that he will arrive at its articulation through an expression of how he himself reacts to what is going on about him.

I do not believe that Edward Albee wrote *The Zoo Story* (an extraordinarily provocative first play) by calculating that it was just what off-Broadway wanted. As a matter of fact it was Berlin which wanted it first—and Albee knew little or nothing about Berlin.

It is true, of course, that playwrights—like other craftsmen in the arts—are influenced by the works that preceded them. Arthur Miller confesses to have been influenced by the Group Theatre productions he saw while a college student. Albee could not help receiving the impress of Tennessee Williams and several contemporary French playwrights. Jack Richardson (author of *The Prodigal and Gallows Humor*) certainly "took" something from Giraudoux and possibly Duerrenmatt. They used to say Odets looked to Chekhov—though I always doubted it. Brecht admittedly and consciously borrowed from a great variety of sources. All this is natural. We choose food according to our taste and appetite; and it nourishes us according to our metabolism. Originality is the manner whereby we transform what we have consumed into new energy and fresh material.

One of the first plays Clifford Odets brought to me to read dealt with a contemporary artist modeled after Beethoven. Though the play showed something of Odets' headlong romanticism it revealed little of his talent. I suggested that he write from his experience, that is, from the people and milieu he knew. (He had already begun to do so.) My advice to playwrights generally is to write about what they know intimately or are deeply concerned with or vitally attracted to.

A Broadway wiseacre today would advise writing musicals. Writing musical comedy is not as easy as it looks. Anyway the choice is not entirely at one's disposal. One has to be as gifted in respect to the writing of a musical as to the composition of any other kind of play. Apart from this the success of a musical depends not only on its

"book," but on its music, choreography, specialty numbers, etc. The glamor of the musical comedy medium for some writers today is a matter of its popular appeal. But musicals may flop with an even more thunderous thud than other unsuccessful efforts.

To try to meet the demand of the market is to be misguided. In a sense there is no demand for anything on Broadway—except success! Broadway is not really a "market" at all. It is a confined arena to which the prospective spectators flock only when the show that has already been set up is said to be and proves peculiarly attractive. I remember Gilbert Miller's surprise when Emlyn Williams' *The Corn is Green*—a play about a scraggly Welsh miner boy and his school teacher—scored a hit; and my own amazement (and delight) when Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding* proved successful. Almost no one believed that this play had a "chance."

For these reasons I cannot advise anyone as to what to write unless I know a good deal about the individual to begin with. What I can do is to mention some theatrical problems (of perhaps a temporary nature) and describe what I feel to be more or less "in the air." But what was true last year may no longer be true next year. I can only offer speculations—not prognostications.

Production on Broadway is costly, and off-Broadway production is not as modest as is generally supposed. I am not sure that it is much easier to get an off-Broadway production than one on Broadway, but I would recommend that the young playwright think so! A number of plays which have been done on Broadway might have fared much better in the humbler circumstances off-Broadway than they did in the elaborate Broadway mechanism.

Small cast plays (demanding four to eight actors) are financially less burdensome than large cast plays (fifteen actors or more). Single set plays obviously cost less to produce (and operate) than plays with many sets. Heavy realistic settings in a multiple set play usually spell disaster. All this, however, is primary information. I suppose every college freshman is aware of these material considerations.

The playwright should first of all train his sights on the world around him. By this I do not mean that topical plays are "the thing." On the contrary immediate social

events are likely to make better films or television shows than plays. The present moment is more advantageously reflected in the theatre indirectly. The Group Theatre presented a play about unemployment in 1931 called "1931—"; it was exciting but far less telling than Odet's *Awake and Sing* written some years later when the depression had become so to speak a "permanent" aspect of our lives. On the other hand, certain occasional pieces written for special performances and special organizations—like *Waiting for Lefty* about the New York taxi cab strike—may be momentarily highly effective.

It is true that the race "question" (in regard to Africa, the undeveloped countries, as well as the United States) is more than likely to become the subject of an increasing number of plays, but unless the playwright has thought about the matter for a long time and has, so to speak, lived with it his play may well prove maudlin or melodramatic, even trashy.

Present day political problems are going to develop an increasing fascination. To treat them effectively, however, requires wit, knowledge, tact and conviction. Politics need not be dramatized in terms of election campaigns as in *The Best Man*. It may be dramatized obliquely in an historical framework as in many of Brecht's plays, Sartre's *The Flies*, Anouilh's *Antigone*, Miller's *The Crucible*, Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, Osborne's *Luther*, Duerrenmatt's *Romulus* and Giraudoux' *Tiger at the Gates*.

Though politics as such possesses its own inherent comedy or drama as exemplified by Shaw's *The Apple Cart*, Maxwell Anderson's *Both Your Houses*, Sartre's *Les Mains Sales*, the true interest of politics for the theatre lies in its extension in the social scene. The effect of social or political systems are rendered startlingly clear in Duerrenmatt's *The Visit*, O'Neill's *Marco Millions*, Sartre's *Altona*, Shaw's *Major Barbara*. The emphasis in such plays may be psychological, symbolic, atmospheric—a matter of tone and point of view rather than of precise historical validity or polemic intention.

The new English drama has great meaning for its audiences because its references appertain to social metamorphoses that are affecting every phase of English life. Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* has fewer specific allusions to actual events in the play than in the picture made from it. What gives the play substance is part of the general history of England since 1950. The same is true of Arnold Wesker's *Roots*. And though Harold Pinter's plays (*The Birthday Party* and *The Caretaker*) are much influenced by Ionesco and Beckett, they strike a familiar note to their English audiences through the immediacy of their types, atmosphere and speech. These plays are unmistakably associated with sections of London and its outskirts not commonly frequented by West End London theatregoers but well known to all of them.

What aspects of our day are recognizable to all sensitive folk at present? Ours is a world constricted by over-

organization and spiritually at loose ends. Loneliness amid turbulence and ballyhoo, the lack of real communication among individuals, the raucousness of slogans and the absence of ideals substantiated by convinced or spontaneous moral action, bankruptcy in faith, ardor and common goals that might foster or command genuine virtues: these are some of the inescapable characteristics. That is why Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* means so much to Europeans, to the English and to many Americans as well. That is also why such "unpleasant" plays as Edward Albee's *Zoo Story* and *The American Dream* as well as Jack Gelber's *The Connection* make so strong an impression.

A tenderness with little sentimentality, an amorality without indulgence or derision make Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* almost as significant to New Yorkers as to Londoners. Environments and professions insufficiently explored on the stage but sharply and sympathetically observed always arouse something more than curiosity.

We want to discover new worlds or, to put it another way, to discover life—our life—in people and places we had supposed remote, strange, apart. We want somehow to feel ourselves "universal." The longing to see our lives extended beyond the limits of our little corner of the earth, the yearning to conceive of ourselves as somehow omnipresent and broadly typical is stimulated by the playwright who makes us understand past times, distant places, "fantastic" characters presented as our kinsmen in the human comedy.

The English drama today which some people mistakenly regard as replicas of our plays of the Thirties (those of Odet's in particular) merit our study. These new English plays are not "great," but they possess the signal merit of being plays which for almost the first time in recent English dramatic history scout new territory in a new spirit. It is as if the English after a long sleep or period of sloth looked with a clear eye at what they once shunned or loathed and could now contemplate without rancor—indeed with a measure of affection as something understandable and perhaps inevitable—which nevertheless called for change. The English dramatists I speak of do not cry "revolt" or even "down with the system"; they imply that an awakened people will bring on a change from within in the natural and healthy process of their growth.

Despite our "rural" drama of the Twenties and William Inge's plays, I believe further probing and insight into our American land—in the midwest, far west, the northwest, the southwest, the deep south (apart from its color fixation) might yield rich dramatic returns. We do not know ourselves at all well yet—particularly in the theatre.

There is a disposition in every young man or woman not thoroughly indifferent, stupified or vicious to "shoot the works." An outcry of laughter, scorn, wild lyricism, inexplicable enthusiasm or epic negation must emerge from the restive coma of conformity in which our country has

been tossing for more than ten years. Brendan Behan's capers in *The Hostage* may not be entirely appreciated on Broadway because of their particular Anglo-Irish sources, but he too has something to teach us as to possibilities for developing the range of our theatre in a specifically American idiom.

The relative off-Broadway success of such a first play as Arnold Weinstein's *Red Eye of Love* means that we have an audience cordial to cartoon distortion for satiric purposes. Years ago E. E. Cummings' play *him* accomplished something in this mode (his was essentially a poet's play) but its form was barely understood at the time; its artistic vocabulary struck the average theatregoer as weird and its considerable social meaning—due to widespread apathy or complacency as to the nature of our prosperity during the Twenties was wholly missed.

I mention Cummings' play because nowadays the young American playwright in looking for models of modernity usually turns to Europe (to the French in particular) and it may benefit some of our playwrights to seek suggestions and stimulation closer to home and to what Van Wyck Brooks, in a somewhat different connection, named our "usable past." Even the "fantasy" of Percy MacKaye's old play *The Scarecrow*—though of very special vintage—may point to new paths away from four-square realism.

The notion that realism itself (as represented in the contemporary American theatre by Lillian Hellman or Tennessee Williams—whose work nearly always spills over into symbolism) is now an obsolete or unfruitful form of drama is rather more theoretical than real. (The fact that there are Action Painters of marked talent and considerable sales value does not mean that aspiring artists would do well to abandon all the classic disciplines and techniques.) Hugh Wheeler's *Big Fish, Little Fish*, produced on Broadway last Spring, though it never achieved a clear focus is realism that is sustained by true observation and its sentiment while tinged with mockery was not wholly devoid of sound instinct. What makes this play interesting is the fact that while it presents a bowl of queer fish we come to realize that they are not so different from us that we can view them as strangers. Seen in the proper perspective—which the New York production last season despite many admirable features did not altogether provide—we might have recognized some close relatives in the characters of this remarkable first play.

My "advice" to young playwrights may be summed up by quoting Chekhov in *The Seagull*: "I come more and more to the conviction that it is not a question of new and old forms, but that what matters is that a man should write without thinking of forms at all, write because it springs freely from his soul."



THE ACROBATS

A Comedy in One Action

by

Berry Fleming

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CHARACTERS

JIMMY

CAPTAIN, grandfather of Jimmy

DR. TURNQUIST

ROSEMARY

MARY, daughter of Rosemary

MAY

MORT, a clown

LUNO, brother of Mort

UNCLE FIVE

THE SWEET SINGER

and

THE MAN WITH SHOES

COP, INTERNE, SAILOR, DANCER, TRUMPET PLAYER,
ROUSTABOUTS, and others.

SCENE

The midway of an undistinguished carnival

TIME

Anytime now

(The action will be interrupted twice, as indicated, continuing after brief pauses with no time-lapse suggested.)

Production Notes:

1.—Most of the characters will show no signs of aging, but JIMMY and ROSEMARY will age about forty years from opening to close, and DR. TURNQUIST will age about twenty from his entrance to the attack by LUNO. The aging will be most pronounced in JIMMY, who will show it in his face and movements and in the state of his clothes, which ravel, lose buttons and accumulate tears and splits.

2.—Several of the actors will play two or more parts. The point is to suggest "ages" as well as characters, to suggest continuity, recurrence, pattern; changing individuals in the midst of unchanging types; individuals changing into their parents *in person*:

The actor who plays Jimmy's grandfather will play JIMMY as an old man;

the actor who plays JIMMY as a young man will play YOUNG MAN TWO and YOUNG MAN THREE;

the actress who plays ROSEMARY as a girl will play Rosemary's daughter, MARY;

the actor who plays the SAILOR will play the MARINE;

the actor who plays the STRIKER BOSS in the beginning will play the TICKET SELLER, the BARKER and the STRIKER BOSS at the end;

the actor who plays the STRONGMAN will play the SWORD-SWALLOWER and the BLOWTORCH MAN.

The INTERNE, the COP, the DANCING GIRL will be the same throughout, no aging, as will the crowd, the Concessionaires and other carnival performers; minor changes in costume will indicate the passage of time.

THE MAN WITH SHOES remains the same in all respects, same hat, same costume.

3.—The scenery will be suggestive rather than specific. The necessary shifts will be made during the action, "before your eyes," as part of the theme; roustabouts in work clothes will bring in a prop from the right, set it up, leave it, and when it has served its purpose, remove it, left. They and the CHARACTERS will pay little or no attention to one another.

4.—The principle characters will always enter from the general left and go out to the general right, except MORT, LUNO and MR. SHOES, with whom it will be the opposite. There will be a more or less constant flow of crowd characters crossing left to right, six or eight types crossing in different combinations. The offstage music and carnival sounds will be taped in the proper sequence and played back through loudspeakers.

• • •

For several minutes before the action begins you hear, off right, the gay barrel-organ music of a Merry-go-Round, soft at first. It rises as the house lights dim, and other carnival sounds come in through it—a scale of notes on a trumpet, the "bong!" of a Hi-Striker, the "pings!" from a shooting gallery, the hollow rumble of a roller-coaster, squeals of ecstasy (or possibly dismay).

The stage is dark; no curtain.

Two or three young people hurry across the front of the stage, left to right; two or three hurry down the aisle.

MR. SHOES comes in from the rear of the house and proceeds in a leisurely way toward the stage, looking about, offhandedly filing his nails, a rather distinguished figure in a Texas hat, a thin folded newspaper under his arm. You can't tell much about his age but he is certainly not young. He takes the jostling of the hurrying young people in good part.

As he mounts the stage, right, a light picks him up and the carnival sounds diminish. He pauses at the side, gazes out over the audience as if shaping his thought for an announcement or a few agreeable remarks.

A SAILOR and his girl stop at the other side, right, front, to watch him. A Roustabout with an empty Coca-Cola crate stands near them watching.

GIRL [in a loud whisper] Who is he?

SAILOR. Shut up. I want to hear what he says.

ROUSTABOUT [wearily] He ain't going to say anything.

SAILOR. S-s-s-h!

Everyone waits, expectant. The barrel-organ music is just audible. After a moment Mr. Shoes smiles, turns up his hands, giving it up; there are no words for it. He faces off, lifts an indulgent finger; the house lights fade out quickly, the lights come up on the stage and the music and carnival sounds rise again. He turns to watch the crowd about the entrance gates, left.

GIRL [to the Roustabout] Who's that?

ROUSTABOUT. That's the Man With Shoes.

SAILOR [palms her toward the gates from behind] Now you know, honey.

It is an animated attractive scene of fairgoers buying tickets, moving in. A Negro trumpet player on a bally stage at the rear hits a few notes, warming up.

Two girls in fresh cottons emerge, gay and excited; the one in the candy-striped dress with the ice cream cone is Rosemary.

They whisper, looking across at a young man of 17 or so, long-legged, broad-shouldered, bursting out of his clothes; he looks like a sound and reliable boy who if he were supposed to deliver your paper would get it there somehow, rain or shine. This is Jimmy.

The old man with him is his grandfather the Captain, a person of dignity and presence in a white-top navy cap and a neat blue jacket of civilian cut that is somehow reminiscent of the sea. He carries a silver-mounted walking stick. He would seem, usually, to be able to take care

of almost any situation, but at the moment he is in some doubt.

The Captain removes his cap uncertainly, wipes his forehead with a generous handkerchief.

JIMMY [studying his face] Are you all right, grandpa?

CAPTAIN. A little tired, Jimmy-boy.

JIMMY. Why don't you sit down a minute?

Jimmy sees the Roustabout with the empty crate, gets it from him, dusts it off, sets it up on end. He takes no account of the girls.

The Captain mops his face and Jimmy guides him to the crate.

JIMMY. Sit down here a minute, grandpa. Rest yourself. We've got plenty of time.

The Captain sits, fans himself with the cap. The music breaks off and a firm voice comes out of the loud-speakers.

VOICE. Welcome, boys and girls—young and old—one and all! Welcome to Joyland!—You can walk—you can run—you can ride!

Mr. Shoes, at the side, cocks his ear, smiles as if he has heard it all before but never tires of it.

VOICE. Visit the grand display of Arabian Horses—the Great Comic Company of Acting Monkeys—the much admired Indian War Dance on horseback—

JIMMY. Feeling better now, grandpa?

CAPTAIN [not too sure] Oh yes. Much better.

Jimmy and the girls exchange looks. The girls are quite ready to start a flirtation but Jimmy is busy with his grandfather; he is a little shy too.

VOICE. Laugh at the laughable pantomimes and comic interludes of the fabulous—Purgatori Twins—Mortimer and his little brother Luno. Swing and swoon to the greatest musical novelty extant—being a complete Saxophone Band—made up of beautiful young ladies—in magnificent costumes and—appointments.

Mr. Shoes nods, chuckles, goes off, right.

VOICE [more intimate] Joyland is an exhibition—ladies and gentlemen—of a strictly moral character—and free from the many objections—frequently—made to entertainments—of this description—

The Trumpet Player breaks in, as if enough were enough, does a run up the scale to an exuberant top note, holds it, cuts it off, flamboyantly shakes the spit out of the horn. Jimmy laughs, appreciating, having a good time.

The girls smile at Jimmy but he is more interested in the Trumpet Player. They give up on Jimmy, turn haughtily away.

Roustabouts start removing the entrance gates and ticket booths, and the crowd thins out a little, the lights drawing in to show: Jimmy and the Captain toward the right, two or three admirers in front of the bally stage watching the Trumpet Player, and, in a half-shadow, a whitefaced clown in a polkadot collar the size of a teenage garter belt. This is Mort.

He is propped against a corner of the bally stage patiently observing the Captain; he has great gloves and large white shoes shaped like bare feet.

Jimmy doesn't see him but the Captain does, studying him covertly, fanning with his cap.

The Trumpet Player runs a hectic cadenza, finishes off with a flourish, pauses for breath and horn-shake. Jimmy is delighted, claps with the others.

The carnival sounds diminish now but the barrel-organ music continues, low.

CAPTAIN [slanting his head at Jimmy but eying Mort] Who's that character over there?

JIMMY. Where, grandpa? You mean the horn player?

CAPTAIN. That other one. In the shadow back there. I've seen that salamander before. Somewhere.

Mort lifts a shoe, examines it, scratches the sole, reacts to a tickle. Jimmy laughs; he likes clowns.

JIMMY. That clown? That's a clown, grandpa.

CAPTAIN [uneasy] He's got up like a clown but I'm not so sure. He looks like somebody I knew in a naval hospital once. Or it may have been on a troop ship. Except he's too young.—Let's go on, Jimmy. I don't take to him.

The Captain replaces his cap, grips his stick, gets ready to rise.

Mort moves out of the shadow, wanders past then turns abruptly and lays a soiled glove lightly on the Captain's shoulder.

MORT [mocking] Well, if it isn't the Captain!

CAPTAIN [glaring] I beg your pardon!

MORT [undaunted] Good evening, Captain.

CAPTAIN. Only my intimate friends address me as "Captain."

MORT. Now, now—Captain.

Jimmy is indignant at such impudence, stands aside waiting for the Captain to rise up and put the clown in his place. But the Captain only seems to sink down more heavily on the crate.

Mr. Shoes looks in from the side, studies Mort and the Captain earnestly.

Jimmy doesn't see him; pauses uncertainly then takes over himself, brushes the glove away.

JIMMY. Lay off, will you! Can't you see he doesn't like it? This is my grandpa.

MORT [patting the captain familiarly on the back] I know grandpa. And grandpa knows me.—Don't you, grandpa?

Jimmy looks about confused and baffled at the audacity, sees Mr. Shoes.

JIMMY [as Mr. Shoes goes] Hey, Mr. Shoes! This clown here—Mr. Shoes! [turns back to Mort] Lay off my grandpa, I tell you!

The Captain is in distress, chest rising and falling in short breaths.

CAPTAIN [voice weaker] You run along now, Jimmy-boy. Let me talk to this character alone.

JIMMY. You know him, grandpa?

CAPTAIN. I know him.

The Trumpet Player breaks in with a scuttling climb up the chromatic scale, at the climax of which the Dancer appears beside him, strikes a pose.

Jimmy spins round, angry at the sudden racket, ready to silence it with violence if necessary.

His attitude changes at the sight of the dancer, a young woman with shoulder-length hair the color of the trumpet moving now under the notes as if they were drops of warm rain, receiving them on the tips of her upstretched hands and letting them course in bright rivulets down her bare arms and into her torso and her hips until she seems wet with music; she is a dreamy-faced girl with lowered eyelids and a look of detachment on her mouth as if there were nothing else in the world but her body and the feeding horn.

Jimmy is fascinated. He forgets the Captain, Mort, everything, takes a step or two under the pull of the strange magnet reaching across from the bally stage into his stomach.

Behind Jimmy's back, Mort takes a stand astride the Captain's knees, gloves gripped round his throat. The Captain's stick falls; his cap tumbles off as Mort forces his head back against the brightly striped bunting round a post.

CAPTAIN [gasping] Jimmy-boy!

Jimmy is absorbed, doesn't hear.

CAPTAIN [weaker] Jimmy.

Jimmy whirls about, sees, attacks Mort from behind, aghast and furious. Strikes him, claws at the great glove fingers.

JIMMY [desperate] You—you—

Mort drives him off with an unsporting kick. He releases the Captain now who slips gently off the crate, crumples face down in a grotesque bundle on the white-top cap and the silver-mounted walking stick.

The Trumpet Player breaks off as the Captain begins to topple; the Dancer freezes. They watch for a minute, exchange looks, go.

Jimmy drops on his knees by the Captain's body.

Mort stands back, dusts his gloves, preens his tie, slithers off into the crowd.

The crowd gathers round, silent, horrified, curious.

JIMMY. Grandpa! [touches him tenderly] Are you all right, grandpa? [turns him over, springs back, stares.]

A dumpy old woman with a cheerful round face kneels, pats Jimmy on the hand.

OLD WOMAN [matter-of-factly] He's gone. [bends over in a housekeeperly way, straightens the Captain's mussed coat, picks up the cap and stick.]

The young people in the crowd back away hastily but the old ones stand firm.

OLD MAN [coolly] A quick end is a gift more precious than rubies.

JIMMY [to the crowd, getting hold of himself, leaping to his feet] Where is he? Where'd he go? Which way'd he go? [beats recklessly through the crowd, this way and that] Where'd he go?

OLD MAN. Who you looking for, son?

JIMMY. That clown in the polkadot collar! Which way'd he go?

OLD MAN [shaking his head, turning away to watch a swinging searchlight beam] Look at that doggone thing! Ain't that pretty?

Jimmy beats about the crowd.

Dr. Turnquist wanders in, left, a little man of 45-50 with a pair of field glasses strung on the chest of his seersucker jacket as if he were going to the races; he wears a black bow tie and carries a small brown case in one hand.

JIMMY [eagerly, running to him, motioning at the case] You're a doctor. Quick! My grandpa—

DOCTOR. I'm not an MD, if that's what you mean.

JIMMY. All right. Are you a vet? Even a vet—

DOCTOR [smiling at the case] Oh, this! This is a dictaphone. [lovingly] Priceless thing. A willing ear!—A willing ear, you know, is hard to find in the natural state. Nobody wants to listen—

JIMMY [turning away, distracted] Can't somebody help my grandpa? Isn't there something—a cop!

An old-fashioned COP in a gray beehive helmet and black mustaches is standing idly picking his teeth with a kitchen match. He is watching two roustabouts shifting the bally stage to simulate the corner of a bi-diver's tank.

JIMMY [running up to the cop] Look! There's a killer loose round here. One of these clowns. He attacked my grandfather. No reason at all. Just walks up and attacks him. Then runs away.

The Cop tilts his ear, judiciously brushing the backs of his fingernails over his drooping mustache. He weighs Jimmy's story in a thoughtful silence, watching two roustabouts beyond Jimmy as they lay out the Captain, put his walking stick and cap on his chest and carry him out.

COP [sternly, turning to Jimmy] Gambling is against the law, son. Both parties are guilty. If I put him in the clink I'll have to put you in the clink.

JIMMY. I didn't say anything about gambling! I said—

COP. In the sight of the law you're just as guilty as he is. If not more so! Now you better take my advice and move on and don't give me no more trouble.

A tall clown in a pink wig dressed as a woman strolls past with a regal air fluttering a palmleaf fan; the hunchback clown, Luno, is under her skirt representing a bustle. They make one figure with four feet, and the crowd is amused.

Jimmy turns away.

The Cop eyes them suspiciously.

TALL CLOWN [to the world in general] Used to be, you see a cop you feel protected. Now, you see a cop you wonder what you done wrong!

The Clown grabs up his skirt over striped underdrawers and runs off in one direction while the Bustle runs off in another, the Cop giving chase to one then the other and losing both. The crowd screams with joy and delight at the fun.

Jimmy sinks down on the empty crate in despair, lowers his head in his hands.

As the racket subsides the voice of the Sweet Singer comes in from up the midway, distant but clear.

SINGER. Full Many a Glorious Morning Have I Seen
Flatter the Mountain-Tops With Sovereign
Eye—

Jimmy pays no attention at first, then listens, uncomfortable but hearing.

Kissing With Golden Face the Meadows Green,
Gilding Pale Streams With Heavenly Al-
chemy—

The voice is wiped away in the fanfare, off, of a not very good band which after several discordant leaps and skids slams into a rapid tanbark sort of tune. Jimmy drops his head to his knees.

The Doctor, who has been watching the searchlight display, signals to a roustabout and is handed a kitchen chair.

DOCTOR [*to the roustabout*] When do I see the high-diving act?—Ah!

The Diver, a rather hard young woman in a dime-store bath robe, hurries across, strikes a pose at the corner of the tank as if acknowledging an ovation though only the Doctor applauds. She goes at once and the band swings over into a determined attack on TALES OF THE VIENNA WOODS.

The Doctor, looking after her, starts tilting his head as she climbs, off.

DOCTOR. There she goes! [*to Jimmy*] Lift up thine eyes, boy.

Jimmy shakes his head miserably and the Doctor brings his chair over, sits again, focuses the glasses up the ladder. Searchlights follow her up.

DOCTOR. Lift up thine eyes unto the hills whence comest thy help.—Son, I believe those are the tightest tights I ever saw on a high-diver. They fit that girl like a coat of semi-gloss enamel.

Jimmy can't help lifting his head. He looks sadly up the ladder for a moment then drops his eyes.

DOCTOR. Up she goes! And up! Lifted on the helium bubbles of Johann Strauss. [*to Jimmy, in a kindly way*] To all intents and purposes, son, that young woman's as naked as the pink ear of an Easter rabbit.

Jimmy sits up, looks, begins to revive.

DOCTOR. You know, one of the most important things you need to find out in this life is how to eat your cake and have it too.

JIMMY [*contemptuous*] Hunh!

DOCTOR. How to increase participation without increas-

ing the risk. If you can solve that the rest is fairly simple.—One of the greatest minds to tackle the problem was a German named Carl Zeiss, of Jena. [*offers Jimmy the glasses*] With this interesting device of his you can almost make this dive without getting wet.

Jimmy adjusts the glasses, stares through them, absorbed. He is himself again.

JIMMY. That girl's too pretty to be standing up on top of that thing by herself!

DOCTOR. They're good glasses.

JIMMY [*enraptured*] Her eyelids are sky-blue. And she's winded too, from that ladder. You can see her chest moving.

DOCTOR [*reaching for the glasses*] You'd better let a doctor check her respiration.

JIMMY. Her smile is the color of a wet cherry.

DOCTOR. If you please, boy!

JIMMY. And behind her the mere stars.

The Doctor takes the glasses, turns them up, continues to look through them as the music tumbles to a close on a shimmering bang of cymbals and the Voice booms out of the speakers.

VOICE. Ladies and Gentlemen!—With your kind permission—we now pre-sent—for your approval—

JIMMY. Is that the owner speaking?

DOCTOR. He certainly sounds like he owns something.

VOICE. —the tremendously terrible temerity of Princess Maximilia—high-diving, sky-diving Venus—in the illimitable inimitable intrepidity of her—death-defying—forward somersault—

JIMMY. She couldn't be a real princess!

DOCTOR. It's hard to tell from here, son, even with the glasses. She's shaped very much like one. Same hips, same—

JIMMY [*bouncing up*] She's too pretty to jump off that thing!

DOCTOR. Wait a minute now!

JIMMY. Just because some big mouth tells her to. [*runs a few steps, stops, shouts up*] Hey, miss!

DOCTOR. You're over-subscribing now.

JIMMY [*to the Doctor, angry*] Why she might break her beautiful neck! [*shouts*] Hey, don't jump off there! [*drums begin to thunder out of the speakers in a mounting roll but he shouts again*] Come back down the ladder! [*to the Doctor*] She can't hear me. What do I do?

DOCTOR. Well—

JIMMY. Hey, miss!—She's going to—she's jumped! [*grabs both sides of his head, watches open-mouthed as she descends*] Over and—over—and—she did it! [*laughing in relief, applauding*]

The Diver appears on the tank rim in the Wagnerian chords and the lights, bent knee, up-flung wrist, carved smile. The lights spark happily on a gold front tooth.

Most of the crowd are indifferent, but the Doctor smiles

and Jimmy applauds wildly. His applause suddenly dies out.

JIMMY [*disillusioned*] She's got a gold tooth.

DOCTOR [*admiring*] Aphrodite the Foam-born!

JIMMY. She's got a gold tooth!

DOCTOR. Isn't it pretty?

JIMMY [*sadness returning*] You like gold teeth?

DOCTOR. The young are so crotchety.

Roustabouts start setting up the counter of a hot-dog stand, front.

JIMMY [*in his sadness suddenly remembering*] That clown! What's the matter with me! [*spins about, searches the faces of the crowd, speaks to them in rotation*] Have you seen that clown, that one with a polkadot collar? Have you seen him? Have you? [*tearfully, as everyone shakes his head, more interested in the Diver*] I want that man! My grandfather wasn't bothering that clown, not bothering anybody. [*Coming round to the roustabouts, then to the Doctor*] Have you—

DOCTOR [*chiding, but not unkind*] Come join me in a cup of coffee.

The Diver goes, the crowd disperses, the music quiets.

JIMMY. Don't interfere! I'm looking for somebody. And when I find him—

DOCTOR. Sometimes it's hard to tell who to look for.

JIMMY. I know who to look for, all right! I just don't know where to look. Or how. Or when.

DOCTOR. When in doubt put something in the stomach. [*To a roustabout*] Here, let's have a couple of those. [*Takes a high stool from one of the roustabouts, sets it up at the counter, motions where to put the other. He mounts the stool*] I'm Dr. Turnquist.

JIMMY [*accusing*] You said you weren't a doctor!

DOCTOR. Oh no. I said I wasn't an MD.—I'm an RGD.

JIMMY [*disdainful*] What sort of doctor is that?

DOCTOR. An RGD? Rerum Generalium Doctor. As you might say, Doctor of Things in General.

JIMMY. Quack!

DOCTOR. No, quacks usually have a very large practice. I have almost none. You see, a practice—like everything else in this word—is built on faith, and people have very little faith that anyone can know much about Things in General. Specific things, yes. But Things in General? [*Shakes his head, smiling without bitterness. Turns to the woman behind the counter*] Two coffees, if you please, ma'am.

Jimmy looks about, listlessly straddles a stool.

JIMMY. I must say, I don't see how anybody can diagnose Things in General.

DOCTOR. The trouble's not with the diagnosis.—Of course you are handicapped by the inferior equipment we must put up with. We make fine microscopes today but our syntheses leave much to be desired, and it's hard to do much without a good synthescope.

JIMMY. Synthescope?

DOCTOR. It's a sort of upside-down microscope. Instead of making large images of small objects it makes small images of large ones. Very handy.—But that's not the real trouble. The real trouble is in the field of treatment. The patients won't take the prescription.

JIMMY. Why not?

DOCTOR. You have to have faith to take a prescription. People don't have enough faith to swallow it.—That wonderful prescription of the ancients, Love Conquers All. Nobody will swallow it; if he's in what he enjoys calling his "right mind." Though it's a good deal more efficacious than penicillin.—As you know.

JIMMY [*annoyed*] Me! Why me?

DOCTOR. You were in love five minutes ago.

JIMMY [*pretending he doesn't understand*] In love with who?

DOCTOR. It doesn't matter "who." The big thing is to love *someone*.

JIMMY. Doesn't matter who!

DOCTOR. We could quibble over the details, but you know very well it was on the credit side of your ledger. It certainly wasn't on the debit side. The death side. Was it?

JIMMY [*wanting to forget it*] I don't know what you mean.

DOCTOR. "Death-defying," the great voice called it. [*Imitating*] Love—the unparalleled—inimitable—death-defying—forward somersault.

JIMMY [*grumpy*] He wasn't talking about love.

DOCTOR. Your grandpa had just breathed his last—beautiful phrase!—but you forgot all about him. [*Triumphantly*] Didn't you?

Jimmy turns his face away, knowing it is true.

DOCTOR. Will you pass the sugar?

Jimmy makes no move and the Doctor gets it for himself, measures out a spoonful for his coffee, stirs, sips.

JIMMY. I shouldn't have forgotten.

DOCTOR. You couldn't help it. Any more than you could help going out under an anesthetic. That was the prescription working—love conquering all.

JIMMY. I feel very bad about it.

DOCTOR. Nonsense! Death doesn't make any difference if you're the—shall we say?—central character. [*Takes a hearty sip of the coffee*] Now dying! That's another kettle of fish. And curiously enough it's the same way with love. It isn't any particular moment of love that's any great shakes, but *loving*! Lord help my soul! That's really something to reckon with. I usually write the prescription as *Loving Conquers All*.

JIMMY [*losing patience with all this*] Look. There's a criminal loose round here. He's disguised himself as one of the clowns. Polkadot collar.

DOCTOR. Mort?

JIMMY [*standing up*] And I'm going to get him. If it's the last thing I do.

DOCTOR. Mort's not a criminal.

JIMMY. I reported him to the cops but they don't care. Nobody cares. [*Motions at the crowd going its way*] Nobody gives a damn.

DOCTOR. Mort's really a very conscientious, responsible, hard-working—[*Stops, suddenly apprehensive*] Or do you mean Luno?

JIMMY. I don't know what his name was. And it doesn't matter. Somebody's got to catch him.

DOCTOR. Hunchback?

The Doctor looks stealthily about him, pours salt into his palm, throws a pinch over his shoulder then another pinch.

JIMMY. No, he wasn't a hunchback.

The Doctor appears relieved but continues to throw several more pinches.

DOCTOR. If you're lucky you can dodge Luno. And let me tell you, he's something to be dodged. [*Throws the rest of the palmsful at once*] He can tie you into knots until you think you're a pretzel.

JIMMY [*disgusted at the salt throwing, about to walk away*] I don't care about all that.—Everybody talks round and round and never tells you anything! There are things I need to know.

DOCTOR. Such as?

JIMMY. Not such as how to throw salt over my shoulder!

DOCTOR. Ritual is not altogether to be despised. It's one way you can tell us from pigs.—What don't you understand?

Jimmy hesitates, comes back, sits down again hopeful.

JIMMY. It's hard to say what I don't understand.

DOCTOR. It's all perfectly simple. One may be distressed but there's no need to be confused.

JIMMY [*trying to say it*] Nothing seems solid any more. I get a feeling of a lot of holes somewhere. Holes everywhere. Big holes. Maybe it's all holes. Like that net under the tight-wire.

Roustabouts come in, start setting up a Hi-Striker at the back.

DOCTOR. Hold on now. A net's not all holes by any means.

JIMMY. Practically.

DOCTOR. The only trick about a net is to make yourself bigger than the holes and you're all right.

JIMMY [*almost ready to give up*] It's not like a net then. It's just a hole.

DOCTOR. You can't have a hole without something for it to be a hole in.

JIMMY [*suddenly eager*] Now wait a minute! That's just what I want to know. *What is it a hole in?*

DOCTOR [*thinking*] Well—

JIMMY. Okay, now don't dodge!

DOCTOR. Well, there are a few slim truths crisscrossing the holes.

JIMMY. All right. Such as. Such as.

May approaches them from behind, a tallish girl in a

tailored suit of stiff brown watermarked silk, prim shading into prissy; a frill of lace trembles modestly between the lapels of the jacket. They don't see her yet.

DOCTOR. Well such as, for example, the pattern. You're always running into a pattern—

MAY. May I have your attention a moment, please?

JIMMY [*to the Doctor, waving her away without looking*] Go on. That's exactly the sort of thing I want to know.

MAY. Look, boys. May I have your attention a moment—*The Doctor turns his head with a mild impatience at the interruption, then looks harder.*

DOCTOR. Good Lord, you certainly may.

MAY. Sorry to interrupt but—

DOCTOR. What did you say your beautiful name was?

MAY. I'm May.

JIMMY. Well, May, we're busy right now. We're in the midst of—

Jimmy runs out of words as May lifts her skirt and starts making a half-comic effort to fasten the back clip of her garter.

MAY. I seem to be coming to pieces. I wonder if you would—

DOCTOR. I certainly will, you undeniably cutest of all God's miraculous contrivances.

The Doctor moves to help her, and Jimmy, overcoming his shyness, puts his hand on the Doctor's shoulder, pulls him back.

JIMMY. I'll do it.

DOCTOR [*struggling*] You'll get caught up in that thing, boy, and strangle yourself.

JIMMY. Sit down. You're shaking like a ferryboat—I'll help you, miss. [*Starts to help her then draws back*] What's this! A scar. A terrible vaccination scar on your—your—

MAY. That's a thigh, junior. Why don't you run on back to studyhall and get your algebra.

JIMMY [*standing off*] We were just about to dig out something important when you came by.

DOCTOR. Don't split hairs, boy.

MAY [*to the Doctor*] You don't mind a little scar, do you, dad? On the thigh?

DOCTOR. No more than a spattered insect on the windshield of a gift Cadillac.

The Doctor clips the garter for her, pats her possessively on the bottom and they walk off cheerily into the crowd without giving Jimmy another glance.

JIMMY [*scowling after them, his disappointment at being left behind disguising itself as contempt for the Doctor*] Old lecher!—Old quack! [*Shoves his fists in his pockets, turns away*].

Loneliness, then sadness, takes hold of him, the barrel-organ music comes up, quiet, in the tune it was playing when the Captain saw Mort, and Jimmy remembers.

A Small Boy passes, licking a candy stick, absorbed in a comic book.

JIMMY [*to the boy, wearily*] Look here, have you seen a clown round this place in a polkadot collar? [*Boy moves on, no response*] That clown attacked my grandpa—my grandfather. Help me find him and I'll give you—

Boy moves on, reading, doesn't hear.

There is a group round the Hi-Striker now. The Sailor swings the mallet, hits the bell.

Jimmy looks round at the "bong!", searches the faces of the group, searches beyond it and back.

The Sailor swings, hits the bell again, leans on the mallet while his Girl runs her fingers admiringly over his muscles. He pushes her off with a wink at the Boss of the Striker. She is offended, turns away with a pout, sees Jimmy, smiles at him. While the Sailor is getting two cigars from the Striker Boss, sticking both between his teeth, she takes the mallet from him, drags it over in front of Jimmy.

GIRL [*to Jimmy*] You show him. Thinks he's so smart!

JIMMY [*grins, accepts the challenge. To the girl*] Just watch me, now!

STRIKER BOSS. Step right up, gentlemen! Don't be shy! [*To Jimmy*] Yes sir! This gentleman right here. That'll be a dime ten cents.

Jimmy digs down, pays.

JIMMY [*to the girl*] Watch me now.

Jimmy hefts the mallet, appraises the problem, the nickel-plated chaser, the wire, the brass bell at the top. He waves about him in a ham gesture for more space, takes his stance, licks his palms.

Behind Jimmy's back the Sailor lights both cigars, blows smoke at the girl; she smiles, accepts the apology and they walk off, arms about each other.

Jimmy swings, the chaser zips up the wire, the bell clangs. He laughs in surprise and triumph, flexes muscles.

STRIKER BOSS [*ironical*] Mr. Hercules!—What a man, what a man!

Jimmy doesn't mind; turns round for the girl's acclaim. He is disappointed not to find her.

The crowd sees nothing unusual in what he has done, stares at him in apathy. Only Uncle Five smiles indulgently, a tall, patient, obscurely wounded man in spectacles, frayed serge trousers and tan shoes with rubber heels worn down to the leather.

STRIKER BOSS [*taking up his spiel*] Step right up, gentlemen! Don't be shy! Swing the little hammer and hit the bell! Show the little woman what you've got [*smirks*] in your pants—I mean up your sleeve! [*To Jimmy*] What's the matter, mister? You want to bang it again? That'll cost you a dime ten cents, two for a quarter.

JIMMY [*smiles, motions at the box of cigars*] You forgot my smoke.

STRIKER BOSS. Your smoke? Mamma say you could smoke?

The crowd laughs; Jimmy smiles.

JIMMY. I can smoke.

STRIKER BOSS [*turning away*] Here we go gentlemen? Here we go! Swing the little hammer—[*To Jimmy*] That's all, mister. You're getting in the way now. [*Taking the mallet*] A little to one side, mister. Right over here—

JIMMY [*patient*] But you forgot my smoke.

STRIKER BOSS. I just give it to you, chief. What'd you do, swallow it?—Here you are gentlemen! Step right up! Swing the little hammer and up she goes! [*To Jimmy*] You can go now, mister. Vamoose! Skidoo! Twenty-three!

JIMMY [*confused, puzzled at how to handle it*] I rang the bell. I get a cigar for ringing the bell, don't I?

STRIKER BOSS [*in Jimmy's ear*] You'll get a kick in the ass, Reuben, if you keep begging for it.

Jimmy doesn't know whether to insist or back down. His voice is undecided, half firm.

JIMMY. Don't call me Reuben.

STRIKER BOSS. Head out, Reuben!

Jimmy is about to give up when Uncle Five moves forward.

UNCLE FIVE. This man hit the bell. I saw him. I heard him. Give him his little prize and let him go his way.

STRIKER BOSS [*pushing up his hard hat in amazement*] What's that, pops?

UNCLE FIVE. And I'm not "pops," for your information.

STRIKER BOSS. A little louder please!

UNCLE FIVE. I'm Professor Fiveash of the Department of Romance Languages at the College.—Incidentally, I am also a conscientious objector to fraud, deceit, imposture, trickery, chicanery and hocus-pocus in all their many forms.

STRIKER BOSS. You are? Well, I do declare!

JIMMY [*to Uncle Five*] It doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter at all.

UNCLE FIVE. I don't agree with you. It matters a great deal. Trickery breeds like flies. [*To the Striker Boss*] Give him his cigar.

The Striker Boss looks about, pretends to see help on the way.

STRIKER BOSS. Here come the cops. [*Calls out over their heads*] Here he is, officer. Here's your man.

The crowd draws in, hoping for the worst. Uncle Five manfully folds away his glasses.

JIMMY [*to Uncle Five, begging, hand on his sleeve*] Come on. Let's get out of here.

STRIKER BOSS [*loud*] Going round pinching little girls! You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Both of you. Dirty-minded, immoral turpitudes!

UNCLE FIVE [*quiet*] Give the young man his cigar and let him go his way.

A police siren rises, draws nearer, sinks.

JIMMY [to Uncle Five] I don't want the damn thing. Come on. Decency's no match against cheats.

UNCLE FIVE [severely] I beg to differ. It's the only match. [To the Striker Boss] I'd rather not report you to the police but if you impell me to I will.

Rosemary breaks through the circle, seizes Uncle Five by the arm, pulls. She is somewhat small; brisk and maneuverable like a car with a short wheelbase.

ROSEMARY. Come on, Uncle Five! This instant!

UNCLE FIVE. Just a minute now, Rosemary my dear.

ROSEMARY. No! Not a second! Right now! [Motions at the siren, which rises again, much closer].

UNCLE FIVE. If honest people don't make a stand against knavery who in heaven's name will? You can't expect the knaves to do it.

ROSEMARY [tearfully] I don't know. I don't care.

UNCLE FIVE [gently disengaging his arm] Somebody's got to care.

ROSEMARY. You know what always happens. You're bound to lose.

UNCLE FIVE [smiling] My dear, you never lose. You always get back more than you lose.—I've told you many times, the harpy's really Ariel, you know.

ROSEMARY. Let somebody else do it. [Stares resentfully at Jimmy] Let this man do it. He started it.

The siren cuts off, close in.

JIMMY [half to himself, watching her in rapt admiration] I don't know what to "do" but I'll do it—if you just promise to watch me.

The Cop in the beehive helmet and two others start shoving through the crowd, nightsticks waving.

STRIKER BOSS [to the cops] Look out for 'em, boys. The old one's got a switchback.

The Cops descend on Uncle Five.

ROSEMARY [to Jimmy] Do something! Do something!

The Cops quickly overpower Uncle Five, throw him down.

ROSEMARY. Don't just stand there!

Jimmy rushes in beside one of the cops who is putting handcuffs on Uncle Five.

JIMMY. Look here, this old gentleman hasn't done a thing—

The Cop clouts Jimmy neatly on the head and all the lights go out, as if from the blow.

In the dark the sounds of scuffling and general turmoil lead up to the bang! of a metal door; the siren starts up again, off, rises and dies away into the barrel-organ music of the Merry-go-Round.

The house is black dark except for six or eight large blue five-pointed stars in an egg-shaped oval against the sky space; with a quaint device the pattern rotates slowly to the music.

After a minute the siren comes in again, far away, and the music dies down to let through Jimmy's groan. The stage lights come up gradually—1/4 up—to reveal Jimmy

stretched out half prone against the flap of a tent marked "Dressing Room, Ladies." He is just coming to, regaining consciousness in synchronization with the rising lights. The star-pattern is still clearly visible.

JIMMY [half out] What happened? Where was I?

The lights come up—1/2 up—to show Jimmy touseled and bruised; there is a six-inch rip in his trousers at the knee.

The Small Boy wanders across immersed in the comic book. He stumbles over Jimmy's feet, rolls over, sits up where he ends and goes on with the comic book without interruption.

JIMMY [holding his head, looking up at the stars] I'm a circle of stars.—Circles inside of circles. Ovals in ovals.—Awarenesses wrapped in awarenesses.—Loves wrapped in hates wrapped in loves. Life wrapped in death wrapped in life. [Sits up suddenly, looks round.] What's happening here!

BOY [immersed in the comic book] Tracy's still after him. Ain't caught him yet.

JIMMY. I was after something. [sinking back, holding his head] Round and round. I'm moving outward in concentric waves—as if a considerable rock had been dropped in the middle of me. [Leans his shoulders against a tent pole in the attitude of Michelangelo's Adam, left wrist dangling out over his torn knee.] What's happened?

BOY [turning a page] They looking everywhere.—Be quiet.

JIMMY [dreamily] I was looking everywhere. For somebody. Or for something.—Can't re-mem-ber.—I don't think I'm getting any current. [Brings his first two fingers slowly together, watching as if for a spark, shakes his head] No spark. [Returns his left wrist to the dangling position.]

Two Girls with towels enter the tent behind him in wet bathing suits, fresh from swimming. He doesn't see them yet.

JIMMY. I'll have to wait—for the current to come back on—from Jehovah's electric finger—

The Girls move in and out behind the tent flap, peeling off the suits, drying themselves, chattering, breaking into runs of contented laughter. They don't see Jimmy.

Jimmy turns his head sleepily toward the voices, watches the girls, begins to revive, the current coming back on.

The lights come up full, the stars disappear.

The Boy looks up from his book, scowls at the girls.

BOY [viciously] Sh-h-h-h!

The Girls pay no attention, go on chattering, and the Boy turns his back to them, bends over the book.

JIMMY. I'm beginning to remember now. There was somebody named Rosemary. Rosemary, that's for remembrance. [To the girls] Excuse me. Either one of you girls named Rosemary? It's hard to tell about names when you have nothing on—and yet, I believe I would know Rosemary—

BOY. Hey, can it, will you, doc!

The Girls are so busy with their chatter they don't hear anything. When they are dressed they pick up the bathing suits and towels and disappear behind the flap toward the entrance marked "Dressing Room, Ladies."

Jimmy jumps to his feet, moving to head them off at the entrance, stumbles over a guy rope in his haste, picks himself up, waits. He is fully recovered now.

Roustabouts start setting up a bally stage, shoo the Boy to one side.

As the Girls come out of the entrance Jimmy steps in front of them with a welcoming smile, a hand out to each.

JIMMY. How nice you look!

The Girls stare at him coldly, move to pass him by.

JIMMY. Hey, wait a minute. I'm Jimmy. [*As they pass*] You know Jimmy.

GIRL. We never laid eyes on you before, Mr. Push. [*Move past him.*]

JIMMY. But that's impossible! I know you from A to Z. [*Chestfallen, as they shove past*] From Abigale to Zoë. [*Stands looking after them, forced to accept it.*]

A Strongman in a diagonal leopard skin mounts the bally stage; he is followed by the Trumpet Player, with a trombone this time, who does several exuberant slides and fanfares. A small crowd gathers.

A Roustabout hands up a bucket of water and the Strongman after appropriate theatrics and musical preparation hangs the bucket handle on his stuck-out tongue. The Trumpet Player backs him up with a victory flourish.

Some applause from the crowd, not much; none from Jimmy who is still gazing morosely after the girls.

Mr. Shoes appears on a corner of the bally stage, applauding lightly trying to bring it out of the crowd. He pats the Strongman affectionately on the back, coming to the front of the bally stage and peering up the midway like somebody looking for a train. As he turns to go Jimmy see him.

JIMMY. Hey, Mr. Shoes!

Mr. Shoes puts his hand on the Trumpet Player's arm, points up the midway, goes. The Trumpet Player makes ready and hits a collision note as a running Fat Man collides with Jimmy from behind.

As Jimmy recovers his balance he is jostled from the other side by the Fat Man's pursuer—Mort. Mort carries a short-barreled flintlock with a mushroom muzzle. They dash about and through, Mort not maneuvering much better than the Fat Man, handicapped by his great pancake shoes and the heavy gun.

JIMMY [*pulling himself together*] Hey! You!—That's the man!

Jimmy takes after them, the Trumpet Player burlesquing the chase with squawking slides on the horn. The crowd is much amused.

The chase comes back in a minute, the Fat Man in front dodging through the crowd, Mort not far behind, Jimmy after Mort. A comic pursuit. The crowd is ecstatic.

The Fat Man starts round the base of the bally stage. Mort follows. Jimmy drops back to meet them as they come round the other side, crouches, waits. The Fat Man appears, then Mort.

FAT MAN. How close is he?

BOY [*jumping up and down*] He's pretty damn close.

Mort stops suddenly, flings up the butt of the flintlock. The Trumpet Player and the Strongman jump helter-skelter off the back of the bally stage. The crowd freezes, too shocked to move.

Mort, taking no aim but pointing in the general direction of the Fat Man, fires—a terrific blast, smoke—then ducks out in one direction while the Fat Man, untouched, runs off in another.

As the report dies out there is not a sound or a movement for quite a while; everybody is stupefied, aghast.

Then some low cries and whimpers begin and a skinny old woman appears clutching her side, spectacles hanging over one ear, eyes wild. An Old Man in a clean blue shirt starts dancing about on one leg, pointing in amazement at the buckshot holes in his other ankle. A girl holds out the bullet-ripped flare of her skirt.

JIMMY [*beside himself with indignation*] This is the most—most—most—[*doesn't know which way to turn.*] This is—get the police! Get Mr. Shoes! He was right here a minute ago. [*Calls*] Mr. Shoes!

Some of the crowd move in to help the wounded. Two women assist the skinny old woman off, right. Four men show much concern for the girl inside the ripped skirt; she is possibly more upset at what has happened to her dress than the old woman at what has happened to her side. The men assist her off.

The dumpy old woman who helped the Captain eases the old man down on to the ground. Jimmy kneels beside him.

A young man in the white duck pants of an interne joins them matter-of-factly, opens a black bag of tools, starts to work on the old man's leg with a brisk confidence whistling snatches of a popular tune.

JIMMY [*still indignant*] Look here, what's this all the hell about anyhow? What—

INTERNE [*examining*] The extensor longus seems to be ruptured just north of the junction of the peroneus brevis with the internal malleolus plantaris astragalus—

JIMMY. I'm talking about—these were innocent people. They weren't doing anything wrong. Why should they get it? That bastard was shooting at the Fat Man.

INTERNE [*not much concerned, working on the patient*] What'd the Fat Man do?

JIMMY. I don't know what he did but he gets off without a scratch. And what the hell business does he have shooting at anybody? What sort of shindig is this?—It isn't fair. Or square. Or round or straight or any decent shape at all, just haphazard and deformed.

INTERNE [to Jimmy] I better take that off at the knee. Are you next of kin?

JIMMY. No.—But let me tell you something else. It looks to me like every time—listen to this—every time I see that Mr. Shoes something's getting ready to bust loose—

INTERNE. Give us a hand, will you, chief? I'll have to get him to the shop. [To the Victim, with a manly motherliness] All right, old-timer. Now just take it easy and put your arm round my neck. Wait a minute. Let's wipe your face. [Whips a handkerchief out of his hip pocket, balls it up, passes it gently, thoroughly across the Victim's forehead, down his cheeks, beneath his lower lip.]

VICTIM. In this fix, how am I going to get to the Supermarket?

INTERNE. Let me worry about the Supermarket.

JIMMY [heartily, obvious he doesn't believe it] He's going to patch you up good as new.

VICTIM. All I want's to get to the Supermarket and home.

JIMMY. In no time you'll be running to the Supermarket.

VICTIM. The old woman's near blind and I do the cooking, now that Sugarbaby's gone off with the taxi driver—

JIMMY [to the Interne] How is he going to get to the Supermarket?

INTERNE. I don't know, chief. My job's just keeping him out of the cemetery. [Whistles at a roustabout, who comes over] All right. Easy now. Up we go.

They get the Victim to his feet. Jimmy and the roustabout help him toward the right while the Interne puts away his tools, takes a bottle of Coca-Cola out of the satchel, turns it up. He overtakes them.

INTERNE [to Jimmy] Here, let me handle it.

He takes Jimmy's place and he and the roustabout help the Victim off, right.

Jimmy looks after them, leans dejected against a corner of the bally stage as the barrel-organ music comes up, quiet.

The Boy with the comic book wanders in, glances after the Interne.

BOY. Where they going?

JIMMY [dreamily] Where are you going? Where am I going? On my still sound legs.

BOY. Where are you going?

JIMMY. With the stars flying westward in tight formation—and the raincloud erasing Polaris from the blackboard—

BOY [makes a face] What blackboard!

JIMMY. And the white skin beginning to show through the hair line.—Am I going some place, or just, starlike, chasing the sun? Leaflike, just following the warmth?

The Boy is disgusted, opens the comic book.

The music breaks off and the ambulance siren comes in, rises, fades down.

JIMMY [head sinking] How heavy do I journey on my way!

The siren dies out into the song, off.

SINGER. How Heavy Do I Journey on the Way,

When What I Seek, My Weary Travel's End,
Doth Teach That Ease and That Repose to Say,
"Thus Far the Miles Are Measured From Thy Friend!"

The barrel-organ music comes up into the song, overwhelms it. The lights dim out on the stage into dark. The house lights come up full. The music sinks down, ends.

After a stillness of three or four minutes Mr. Shoes comes in, right, with the kitchen chair and a rolled-up newspaper. He takes no notice of the audience, sets the chair down, front, leans back in it propped against the proscenium arch and after polishing a worn pair of bi-focals starts a casual reading of the paper—a flimsy back-country daily of six or eight pages.

He reacts to certain items in it, much interested in one or two, amused by several.

After five minutes or so he is into the inside pages. The barrel-organ music comes up, quiet, as at the beginning, but he pays it no mind. In a little while he chuckles, turns to the audience, tapping the page as if half inclined to let them in on something quaint.

Before he can get his words in shape a Roustabout approaches, leans to his ear for a second. Mr. Shoes nods quickly as if guilty of an oversight, signals, off, and starts folding up the paper as the song comes in—the first two lines without words.

The house lights start dimming out. The Roustabout takes the chair and Mr. Shoes stands a minute with his head cocked, putting away his glasses, listening to the tune.

The lights rise on the stage and the Song picks up at the third line.

SINGER [off]. Doth Teach That Ease and That Repose to Say,

"Thus Far the Miles Are Measured From Thy Friend!"

For That Same Groan Doth Put This in My Mind:

My Grief Lies Onward, and My Joy Behind—
My Grief Lies Onward, and My—

The carnival noises drown him out. The crowd is still wandering past, some with Sno Kones, pennants, canes, hula dolls, panda bears, some with crutches and a bandage or two.

A Jack-in-the-Box Ticket Seller in a high booth is making change and talking up his show through the Merry-go-Round music.

TICKET SELLER. Hur-ry! Hur-ry! Hur-ry! if you want to see John.—The Great Comic Company of Acting Monkeys—for the first time gathered under one tent—pre-cisely—as

they appeared—before the largest and—most brilliant audiences—how many?

Mr. Shoes watches indulgently while a Clown in a broken derby and a tattered overcoat eyes the backside of the complacent Cop, sights from one angle then another until he has the attention of the crowd, then runs up behind him, swings a great kick, misses, lands on his bottom. The crowd enjoys it and Mr. Shoes chuckles, looks out over the audience as if hoping they have enjoyed it too. He greets the Ticket Seller with a casual nod, goes into the show.

A Man rushes in, left, looks about, runs up to the booth.

TICKET SELLER. Hur-ry! Hur-ry! [To the Man] How many, mister? What's that? [Leans his ear] Oh, the donikers? [Points off. The Man rushes out. Calling after him.] Hur-ry! Hur-ry! Hur-ry!—All right, ladies! All right, gentlemen! The Grand Military Spectacle—have your change ready.—Don't crowd.

Rosemary, in the candy-striped dress, wanders in, left, alone, walks up to the booth, looks in her pocketbook. Jimmy comes in, front. They don't see each other.

ROSEMARY [to the Ticket Seller] One.

TICKET SELLER [shocked] How many, baby!

ROSEMARY. Just one.

TICKET SELLER. Ain't no fun—with one.

Jimmy hears, turns.

ROSEMARY. Even so—just one.

Jimmy spots her, pushes toward her.

JIMMY [shouting] No, two! Two [To Rosemary] I've been looking for you everywhere.

ROSEMARY [staring at him] Excuse me. You've got the wrong—

JIMMY. Where in the world have you been? Only where you are does a place arise.

ROSEMARY. You've got me confused with somebody else.

JIMMY [fervently] I'd know you in the dark just by touching your hand.

TICKET SELLER. All right, brother! All right, brother! One green dollar is the bargain price, tax included—

JIMMY. How is Uncle Five?

ROSEMARY [connecting, eyes sparkling] Oh, you!

JIMMY. Yes!

ROSEMARY. Why did you just stand there like a goof and let him take all the blame?

JIMMY. Oh, but I didn't. I tried to stop him. I begged him—

ROSEMARY. You stood there like a goof! A complete galoot! And poor Uncle Five—

JIMMY. What happened to him?

ROSEMARY [on the point of tears] They kicked him and beat him with a rope.

JIMMY. Oh, I am sorry about that.

ROSEMARY. And he hadn't done anything.

JIMMY. No.—Of course he was interfering.

ROSEMARY. He always interferes. Trying to make things right. And he can't get any life insurance, he's such a bad risk.

JIMMY. Who wants to be loved by a life insurance company!

TICKET SELLER [shouting] All right, brother! You bought two tickets. What do you use for money?

Jimmy is holding up the crowd; they grumble at him. As he turns to the Ticket Seller, reaching for his money, Rosemary makes off through the crowd. He catches sight of her, runs after her. When he touches her she whirls about, angry.

ROSEMARY. And here you are trying to start trouble again!

TICKET SELLER [to the Cop] Hey, officer! [Jumps down out of the booth, mad. He runs up to the Cop, who is wandering off].

JIMMY. I'm not trying to start trouble, I'm—

ROSEMARY. Good-bye! [Starts away].

Jimmy grabs her arm, speaks to her close.

JIMMY. Don't leave me. I am smothering in farewells.

Ticket Seller and Cop go off arguing. Roustabouts move in start setting up a shooting gallery in place of the ticket booth.

ROSEMARY. I'd like to see you smothered.—Well, not completely.

JIMMY. Let's go to a shooting gallery and I'll let you shoot me.

ROSEMARY. Is that a promise?

JIMMY. Front or back. On the wing or sitting-duck.

ROSEMARY [appraising the offer] I'm a pretty good shot when I rest my elbow.

JIMMY. You can rest it on me.

ROSEMARY. And shoot you too? [Sticks out her hand] I think I'll buy it.

JIMMY. Sold to the lady in the candy-striped dress!

"Baps!" and "Pings!" come up from the shooting gallery. The Attendant stands a chained .22 on the counter, starts her spiel, a large woman in a leather apron with the biceps of a discus thrower.

Jimmy and Rosemary move toward the gallery. He continues to hold her hand.

JIMMY [intense] Ever since I got here I've been looking for something. The Something More. The Lost More. But I know now what the Something More is.

ROSEMARY. Yes?

JIMMY. You are the Something More.

ROSEMARY. You could be mistaken.

JIMMY. I'm not mistaken. But it's hard to say exactly how I know.—I'll tell you how I know. I can't be selfish with you. Because I can only see myself in terms of you. I couldn't do anything you didn't want me to do, any more than if I didn't want to myself.

ROSEMARY. A rather fine point, don't you think?

JIMMY. No. Here's what I mean. I know a lot more

about myself than I used to and one of the things I've found out is that I'm just a fully-equipped fool when it comes to naked girls—

ROSEMARY [*sarcastic*] Some people *are* that way.

JIMMY. Yes, but here's the point. Fool that I am, if you were standing there now without a stitch on I couldn't even look at you if you asked me not to.

ROSEMARY. Well!—I have no intention of standing here without my stitches, so what difference does a difference like that make?

JIMMY. It's a big difference.

Rosemary laughs, takes his arm, pushes a way to the shooting gallery. Jimmy puts down some money and the Attendant presses a pencil of bullets into a chained rifle

May approaches him on the other side from Rosemary, touches his arm, fumbles with her skirt.

MAY. May I have your attention a moment, please?

Jimmy turns, sees her having the same trouble with her garter-clip as before, shakes his head politely.

JIMMY. Sorry, but I don't have any to spare now. [*To Rosemary*] It's because you're a Nice Girl. I can tell by your hand.

May gives Rosemary a dirty look, fastens the clip herself, moves on.

ROSEMARY [*to Jimmy*] Are you a palmist? You ought to have a booth.

JIMMY. I'm anything you think I am.—And you might as well stop trying to run away.

ROSEMARY. Run away?

JIMMY. You're hiding among the scattered words.

ROSEMARY. Oh, you've torn your trousers!

JIMMY. See what I mean? You're hiding.

ATTENDANT [*losing patience, disgusted*] All right, mister! You going to shoot? You ain't going to shoot?

Jimmy laughs, takes the rifle, hands it to Rosemary. She is awkward with it, tries one shoulder then the other. He puts it to her right shoulder.

Mr. Shoes passes behind them, pauses to watch her aim.

Rosemary shuts one eye, opens it, shuts the other, opens it, shuts both, fires. Pandemonium in the gallery—a bell rings, lights blink, an American flag zips open.

JIMMY. Bull's-eye!

Mr. Shoes looks pointedly at the audience, raises his eyebrows, goes to one side.

Rosemary, mouth open, spins about in amazement, drops the gun, flings her arms round Jimmy.

ROSEMARY. Yippee-e!

Jimmy whirls her round.

The Attendant extends a walking stick toward a board of prizes, hooks a Mickey-Mouse wristwatch, hands it over dangling at the end of the stick.

Rosemary takes it, reaches for Jimmy's wrist.

JIMMY. For me?

ROSEMARY. Who else!

He kisses her.

JIMMY [*as she straps it on*] The touch of your fingers goes up into my elbow. And up my arm. And down my left side. Now it's crawling through my pelvis like a light-footed spider—

There is a brief yell of pain from up the midway. Mr. Shoes, fixed, frowns in the direction of the yell but Jimmy pays no attention to it.

JIMMY [*continuing*] Now it's going down both legs. Now it's hitting the soles of my shoes and bouncing back like a tennis ball—

The yell is repeated and Jimmy comes back to earth, stands up straight, alerted.

Mr. Shoes shakes his head, goes.

JIMMY. That sounds like trouble up there! Somebody's hurt—

Mort comes scampering through, dodging like an open-field runner though the crowd has drawn back and nobody is trying to intercept him. He is dragging something in one hand.

JIMMY. Look out, everybody! He's got that blunderbus again.—My God, that's not a blunderbus! [*Agast*] That's somebody's arm!

Jimmy grabs the rifle off the counter, aims. But Mort dives into a group, tossing them one way and another; Jimmy can't fire.

ROSEMARY. Jimmy!

As Mort breaks clear, Jimmy starts after him. He aims again but the chain snatches the gun out of his hands. He lets it fall, springs after him. They run off.

ROSEMARY. Jimmy! [*Runs a few steps, frantic*] Jimmy!

The barrel-organ music begins to come up gradually as she hesitates, then runs after them.

The music continues on a light-hearted tune as Roustabouts transform the shooting gallery into a hot-dog stand. They bring in two or three stools. The Attendant takes off her leather apron, hands it to a Roustabout in exchange for a dirty cook's apron and a puffed-up cap.

Dr. Turnquist, passing with his dictaphone and field glasses, sniffs, smiles, sits on a stool.

DOCTOR [*to the cook*] Cheeseburger, medium. [*Sniffs*] And put in some of those beautiful frying onions.

Things become routine again, a waltz tune rises for a minute or two then fades out as the Doctor opens up his dictaphone on the counter, uncoils the wire.

DOCTOR [*to the cook*] And may I borrow a little of your—juice?

COOK. Tomato? Fresh-fruit? What kind you like?

DOCTOR [*waving the plug*] Just plain juice.

The Cook takes the wire, plugs it in under the counter and the Doctor settles himself to talk into the microphone. He looks up as Jimmy comes in, chest heaving, disheveled, dragging his feet.

JIMMY [*sad*] The bastard got away.

DOCTOR [*goodnaturedly*] Everything gets away.—Sometimes it just outruns you. Sometimes it skins out of a coat as you grab the collar. Sometimes it just turns into something else. You overtake it, grab it, hold on to it, but when you look closer you see it isn't what you were chasing at all. That got away too.—But that's not the important part—

JIMMY [*banging on the counter, indignation breaking through*] What gives here!—That son of a bitch had somebody's arm!

The Doctor opens the cheeseburger, squirts in a shot of ketchup.

JIMMY. It's bad enough to shoot into crowds but to start grabbing off arms and legs! I heard that poor man yell.

DOCTOR [*adding a spoonful of relish*] It's a yelling operation.

JIMMY. Looks like things are getting worse and worse. [*anger rising at the Doctor's equanimity.*] He may grab off your arm next time. Or mine.

The Doctor nods, bites into the sandwich.

DOCTOR [*with his mouth full*] That's true.

JIMMY. What does he mean, going round grabbing people? What's he doing here anyway?—What are you doing here? [*anger going into sadness*] What am I doing here? Why—why—Oh, what's the use of asking? Nobody will tell you anything.

DOCTOR [*as if astonished at Jimmy's lack of schooling*] What are you doing here? Why, you're here to look for God.

JIMMY. In this mess!—That's just a dodge. Whenever people get out over their heads they start talking about God.

DOCTOR. Just a second. Let me cut off my motor. [*Leans over the counter and unplugs the wire*] No use wasting current if you're going to be here a few minutes.

JIMMY [*dejected*] Where can I go?

DOCTOR. Your ears won't listen as well but they are human.—Now you said something about looking for God.

JIMMY. You said it.

DOCTOR. You probably won't find him, in Person, but while you're looking—eyes peeled, ears turning—you may stumble on some other things that will enlighten you. And that may even be true for a time.

JIMMY. Oh, nuts!—I want something that's true for longer than "a time." Have you seen a girl round here in a candy-striped dress? *She's* true. Truer than anything you know.

DOCTOR. Personally, I like fresh truths better than the ones that have been kicking round too long.

A Roustabout passes with a bucket, sets it down to light a cigarette. Jimmy turns it over, stands on it, searches the midway up and down.

DOCTOR. You go out in your garden in the early morning and the air is rested and full of hope and the dew is on the leaves, and maybe you can find a few fresh sprouts

of Truth to pick for your dinner. If they're fresh-picked they're delicious.

JIMMY [*leaning over toward the glasses*] Excuse me. Do you mind?

The Doctor inclines his neck to let Jimmy lift off the strap.

DOCTOR. One morning it may be a kind of radish, another morning the Bibb lettuce may look truer than the radishes. One time God is reported in a burning bush, another time you can't find a trace of Him high or low. You often see signs of Him among the paradoxes. He's very fond of strolling through the paradoxes.—And what a crop of them we've had this year! In some places they're way over your head. [*Biting into the cheeseburger*] See anything of your friend?

The Roustabout listens with growing confusion.

JIMMY [*morose*] No.

DOCTOR. You couldn't spot her in all this anyway.

JIMMY. I could spot her. She would be surrounded by a small circular area of untawdriness.

DOCTOR. Whenever you find a paradox you can be pretty sure you're getting close. A paradox is like one of those signs you see on the highway, Caution, Deer Crossing. If you watch very carefully you may see the beautiful arc of a Truth springing over.

This is too much for the Roustabout and he taps Jimmy on the belt. Jimmy gets sadly off the bucket and the Roustabout picks it up and goes.

JIMMY [*banding back the glasses*] You're sure you haven't seen her?

DOCTOR. You seem to be always looking for somebody. The more important something is, you know, the less likely you are to find it by looking for it.

JIMMY [*sarcastic*] No. I didn't know that.

DOCTOR. Oh yes. Nobody ever found happiness by looking for it.—Not that happiness is everything, but it is important. It helps the digestion.

JIMMY [*disgusted*] Digestion!

DOCTOR. Unhappiness is very indigestible.

JIMMY [*bitter*] You want to put everything in your mouth like a baby.

DOCTOR. You don't go to sleep by trying to. It's easier if you try not to.—But if you try by trying not to you won't fool yourself. Your insides are harder to fool than a piece of litmus paper.

JIMMY. What's troubling me is—

DOCTOR [*fingering the plug on his wire*] Maybe I'd better switch on my machine. You're not listening.

JIMMY. I'm listening but I'm not believing.

DOCTOR. Too bad.—I come round to more and more of the beliefs that I discarded in my youth. But believing them now for different reasons. [*toys with the wire but doesn't plug it in*] You remember the poet said, Consider the Lilies of the Field; They Toil Not, Neither Do They

Spin, Yet Solomon in All His Glory Was Not Arrayed Like One of Them.

JIMMY. I remember. And a lot of foolishness it is!

DOCTOR. That's what I said once and I threw it all out the window. Absurd and ridiculous, not to say feeble-minded. What the good man was trying to tell me escaped me entirely.

JIMMY [*grumpy*] And me.

DOCTOR. But now that I'm a lot older and a lot smarter I see what he was talking about. You see, the lilies weren't trying to dress better than Solomon. That's the point. [*Jimmy gives him a balky look out of the corner of his eye but the Doctor takes no notice.*] They weren't trying to do anything.—And yet look at what they were doing! They were alive in the meadow, well nourished, in perfect health, their fabulous digestive systems processing fuel at such top efficiency as to waste practically nothing. They were happy. Not as their purpose in the meadow, but incidentally.

A Pickpocket leans on the counter behind the Doctor, sizes up his pockets.

JIMMY. So the lilies were happy! And how do you know that?—if you please.

DOCTOR. You know because if something had been out of adjustment along the line making them unhappy, and a sepal or a pistil or a stamen had been faded or withered—the way sadness will do—why, Solomon would certainly have walked off with the Oscar. He was no mean dresser himself.—No, obviously something was taking care of the lilies. The old poet was telling me it was God. I said, in my God-less days, casting an eye about at the unspeakable indignities and deformities on all sides of me, that that was a lot of foolishness.

JIMMY. A mis-translation.

DOCTOR. Or maybe a mis-translation. God wasn't taking care of anything. But now—now I see there's something in it after all.

JIMMY [*resentful*] Not for me there isn't.

DOCTOR. Don't be too sure.—What makes things happen to us without our trying?

The Pickpocket starts to work, lifting out a wallet as the Doctor continues, going through it, finding nothing of value, conscientiously returning it to the Doctor's pocket.

DOCTOR. When "trying," indeed, just complicates it. Just brings it up out of the deep channel into the shallows of awareness. Many of our present-day problems result from our going aground in the shallows. What with TV news—and radio commentators—and newspaper columnists—and editorials—and magazines, hardly anything can happen that's not immediately sterilized with words. We are so conscious, the unconscious doesn't have a chance to get going. It's like having a press photographer at every discussion meeting of the Cabinet.

JIMMY. You started out—

DOCTOR. As well chip March's bark in search of April's leaves.

JIMMY. You started out by saying—

DOCTOR. I'm getting round to that.—I don't mean the mind is not a wonderful thing. Government is a wonderful thing too. But they are not prime things. The lilies were doing very well without either.

The Pickpocket has managed to lift out the Doctor's watch. He examines it, holds it to his ear, winds it, shakes it, puts it back in the Doctor's pocket.

DOCTOR [*absorbed*] The mind, in its present state of undevelopment, is baffled at trying to know what life is, what death is. But your body knows. Your insides know. And the pistils of the lily know.—I get a glimmer nowadays of what the good man was saying. And it worries my insides a little because it indicates I must be almost round to where I started. The best view you get of the beginning is from the end—

PICKPOCKET [*breaking in, sings*]

How Many Words in a Bottle of Gin,
Bottle of Gin,
Bottle of Gin?
How Many Words in a Bottle of Gin
At Three o'Clock in the Morning?

Two Times More Than Oughta Be In,
Oughta Be In,
Oughta Be In;
Ten Times More Than Oughta Be In
At—

JIMMY. [*waving him quiet*] Please! [*To the Doctor*] I thought one of those people said Seek. "Seek and ye shall find." You say, "Toil not."

DOCTOR. That's right. That what I'm telling you. God likes to walk among the paradoxes.

The Pickpocket gets back to work, lifts the Doctor's cheeseburger, examines it, returns it to the plate, goes.

JIMMY [*to the Doctor*] Now just a minute, if you don't mind—

DOCTOR. Your life fits practically any interpretation you put on it. That's one of the prettiest things about it. If you like to think it's balanced and designed and fundamentally in order, that'll work. Or if you'd rather have it hit-or-miss, everything out of kilter, that'll work too. If you want to believe in God, that's all right, or if you're happier believing in Godlessness you can do that. Anyway you like it. "Many hands make light work," or "Too many cooks spoil the broth."

JIMMY. You don't tell me just what I want to know but you do seem to be getting closer. Now—

DOCTOR. The closer you come to a real contradiction, the closer you may be to one of the great truths. Because the great truths cut both ways. It's a signal that a Truth may be feeding near by.

JIMMY. Caution, Truth Feeding?

DOCTOR. It means you're getting out toward infinity where everything is true.

JIMMY [*eagerly*] Let me tell you something—

DOCTOR. But the poor old brain doesn't like contradictions. What it likes is dogma—

JIMMY. Let me tell you something. I got bopped on the head once. Knocked me to Kingdom Come. But while I was there—out—cold as a fish—I saw something I had never seen before. [*The Doctor leans over, interested*] But I can't remember what I saw.

DOCTOR [*confidently*] Stars, probably.

JIMMY. Stars, yes. But more than stars. A pattern of stars.—It's terrible I can't remember.

DOCTOR. It doesn't matter whether you remember or not. If it happened to you it's part of you. Part of your Gross Estate, as the tax people like to say—

There is a crescendo of pounding feet and Mort dashes in, slides as if to Third Base and makes a wild grab at the Doctor's left foot.

JIMMY. That's him!

The Doctor jumps back with a desperate squawk and all but frees himself, but Mort pounces again, gets a strong hold on the Doctor's calf and starts twisting.

DOCTOR. [*screeching*] Every man!

Jimmy watches aghast, unable to move.

The Doctor kicks, pulls, strikes, all to no effect, tumbles over Mort as if the end has come. But the swinging binoculars bang against Mort's head and he rolls over, lies out on the ground as if dead, then springs to his feet and runs away.

Peace returns, the Doctor panting, Jimmy rigid, mouth open.

DOCTOR. Damn! That was pretty close.

JIMMY [*incensed, shouting*] That's what I'm talking about! What the hell goes on here!

DOCTOR [*Without looking up, tenderly prodding his trouser leg*] How do you mean?

JIMMY. Mean! I mean this dope coming hell-bent out of nowhere when you least expect it! Attacking innocent people—shooting into crowds—pulling off people's arms! That son of a bitch is dangerous.

DOCTOR. Of course he's dangerous.—Everything's dangerous.

JIMMY. He might have pulled your leg clean off!

DOCTOR [*ruefully*] Indeed, yes.

JIMMY. Or mine, for that matter.

DOCTOR. It's just one of the normal hazards you run if you're inquisitive enough to get up out of bed.—Join me in a dish of fried shrimp.

JIMMY [*emphatic*] No thank you!

DOCTOR. A double-decker sandwich?

JIMMY. Nothing.

DOCTOR. Don't let this sort of thing take your appetite. You're both animal and God, and you have to feed one to keep the other from starving. [*Sniffs*] It's hard to beat

onions frying in the outdoor air. [*Straightens his bow tie, gets up, puts a little weight testingly on his leg*] And of course you're battlefield too. Torn by the high-explosives, plowed by the caterpillar feet of the tanks, injected with the brooding mines, sprayed with the blood of the Seventy Years' War.—The bulletins today are not encouraging, but perhaps God has a secret weapon.

May comes in behind them, brightens at seeing them, lines her lips.

JIMMY [*with a sigh*] What is it all about?—I'm as sad as a sun sinking in the pine-tops.

DOCTOR. Pooh! You don't need to know what it's all about. You haven't eaten the answers on your plate and yet you want a second helping. [*Sees May*] And, son, speaking of God and his wonderful devices, just to your left—

MAY. May I have your attention a moment, please?

JIMMY. [*annoyed*] On Lord, are you coming apart again?

MAY. I don't know what's got into this clip, but—

DOCTOR. Give her a hand. It's only humane. For all practical purposes [*limping away*] she's as crippled as I am.

JIMMY. Hey, wait a minute!

The Doctor goes.

Roustabouts start moving the booth and setting up a car of a Ferris Wheel, center.

May raises her skirt. Jimmy steps back, but the magnet holds him.

MAY [*petulantly*] It's the back one that's acting so opinionated. But I can't see—

JIMMY [*resisting*] I thought Dr. Turnquist fixed it for you.

MAY. He had a lot of ideas about it. [*Confidentially*] I think he was really more interested in my vaccination.

JIMMY [*surrendering, kneeling beside her*] It's really not much of a scar after all, is it?

As he touches her skin his fingers snap away as if from a bare wire; he rubs his arms.

MAY. Sorry.

JIMMY. Look, I'm not an electrician but I think you've got a short circuit.

MAY. Sorry. It does that sometimes. I'll think about something else. I'll count.—One, two, three, four—

While she counts, Jimmy makes a gingerly return to the job, fastens the clip.

JIMMY. Okay. It really ought to have some insulation.

MAY. Eighteen, nineteen, twenty. [*Brushes out the skirt*] Aren't you the man who lost something?

JIMMY [*bitter, getting up*] That's me. That's certainly me.

MAY. Maybe I can help you find it.

JIMMY. How can you help me! I can't remember where I lost it. Or when I ever had it. I can't even remember what it was I lost.

MAY [*teasing him*] Maybe I've got it in my pocketbook.

JIMMY. It's no laughing matter.

MAY [serious] I know what you're looking for.

Carnival noises come up, a music box starts banging out the slow movement of Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto.

MAY [looking about] Where can we talk for a minute?—The Ferris Wheel? Maybe?

Jimmy nods and she moves toward the car. He buys tickets, joins her; they mount two or three steps and sit in the car. She takes his hand.

The car remains stationary, but a rising movement is simulated by lights and a projection of star-points behind. They gaze down over the sides as it seems to rise.

MAY. I love that tune. It's like a letter of advice to the lovelorn.

JIMMY. I'm too old to ride in Ferris Wheels. I feel like a last-year's mockingbird in the top of a sycamore tree—

MAY. Just quiet down now. So you can hear me.

May, silent, gazes at him with a steady, drawing smile.

JIMMY. Well, speak.

MAY [gazing] I'm speaking. I'm speaking to you in code, to your poor aching arms.

JIMMY. My arms don't ache.

MAY [gazing] Are you sure?

JIMMY [feeling his arms] Yes, they're beginning to. [Rubs his arms].

MAY. Rubbing won't do any good. [Laughs] You'd be smarter to rub mine.

Jimmy puts his arms round her, left wrist ending up under her ear; makes love to her.

MAY [rousing from her languor with a sudden frown] What's that ticking?

JIMMY. I don't hear anything.

MAY. That loud ticking! It sounds like a kitchen clock.

JIMMY [glancing at his wrist] Oh!

MAY. What is it?

He unstraps the watch, pushes it hastily into a trouser pocket but she sees.

MAY. A watch?

JIMMY [defiant] It's a Mickey-Mouse wristwatch, if you must know.

MAY. A what!

JIMMY [nostalgically] A friend of mine gave it to me.

MAY [contemptuous] The idea of wearing such a thing!—What troop of Girl Scouts do you go round with?

JIMMY [wistful] She won it in a shooting gallery. Just took a gun and shut both eyes and "bam!"—How do I get out of here? [Looking over the sides] I don't belong here. I just remembered—

MAY [examining] You know, I believe that thing's coming loose again.

JIMMY. And she threw her arms round my neck. And I picked her up and she didn't weigh anything. And when

—and when—[Loses the thread as May begins pulling up her skirt] Let me help you.

MAY. Never mind. Perhaps I can fix it myself. You just sit there and think about your lightweight friend.—If you can!

Jimmy gives up, kisses her vigorously.

MAY. Oh, we're impetuous after all.—Do you mind if I show you something? [Jimmy shakes his head] Some men don't like to be shown anything. They prefer to know it all.—You don't mind?

When he manages to shake his head again she gives him a long and expert kiss.

MAY [drawing back with a confident laugh] How do you like that?

JIMMY [breathless] I feel like a fledgling being fed by a foraging mother.

She kisses him again.

MAY. What do you feel like now?

JIMMY [trying to put it together] Like a thrown newspaper—over watered lawns—

MAY [embracing him] Stop talking.

JIMMY. Spinning and—spinning—and slipping at last—

MAY. Stop talking!

JIMMY. Slipping at last—now—into the blooms of a sasanqua hedge.

The Rachmaninoff drifts off into some raucous runs on a distant trumpet.

She edges away, straightens her clothes, starts to reline her lips.

MAY [looking over] We're almost down.

JIMMY [fervently] I feel as much a part of you as a slice of swallowed beef. [Leans to her] As concerned in your welfare as possessed protein.

She pushes him off, sits away from him.

JIMMY. I can't live—

MAY [brightly] We're down.

JIMMY. I can't live without you.

She stands, touches her jacket here and there, steps delicately out of the car.

MAY. I must hurry.

JIMMY. Wait! Wait! [Grabs her hand] You were going to—

MAY [cool] My hand, please?

He releases it and she walks away.

JIMMY [standing, looking miserably after her] Going to help me find something—something—

Roustabouts motion impatiently for him to get out of the car. He descends and they start removing it and setting up a counter that sells beer. He gets in the way and they push him aside; he is in a fog, gazing crestfallen after May.

A Young Man [played by the actor who took the part of the young Jimmy] wanders in, approaches Jimmy.

YOUNG MAN TWO. Pardon me, sir. [Jimmy makes no response] Pardon me, sir.

JIMMY. Talking to me?

YOUNG MAN TWO. Yes sir. If you—

JIMMY [*indignant*] What do you mean "sir"!—How old do you think I am, junior?

YOUNG MAN TWO [*looking him over*] Well—

JIMMY. All right, son. What do you want?

YOUNG MAN TWO. There are some things about all this, sir, I just don't get. I thought maybe you—

JIMMY. Hell, brother, I'm a stranger here myself!

The Young Man nods an apology, wanders off.

Jimmy returns to his misery, props himself disconsolately on a stool at the counter. Hurdy-gurdy music comes up in the tune of Jimmy's song, quiet. He listens, takes a paper out of his pocket, glances at it.

A Counterman appears in the booth, wipes off the counter with a rag.

JIMMY [*to the Counterman*] I need to blur the focus a little bit, Mac.

COUNTERMAN. Don't sell nothing but beer.

JIMMY [*showing the paper*] This is a song I wrote once—way back when I wasn't seeing any better than that kid there. How about swapping it for a couple of bottles of beer?

COUNTERMAN [*studying it, skeptical*] You made it up yourself?

JIMMY. I think it's original. If it isn't, I've forgotten where I read it.

COUNTERMAN. How does it go?

Hurdy-gurdy music comes up louder. Jimmy sings to the tune.

JIMMY. I To Seek and Thou To Find;
I To Loosen, Thou To Bind;
I To Harken, Thou To Hear.
Thou To See, I To Peer;
Thou To Have and I To Need;
Thou To Flower, I To Seed.

COUNTERMAN [*considering*] Hhm!—Hasn't got no name?

JIMMY. I couldn't let you have it so cheap if it had a name.

The Counterman reaches inside, plunks down a bottle of beer.

COUNTERMAN. I'm a sport. I'll give you one.

JIMMY. Sold!

Jimmy hands him the sheet sadly. The Counterman opens the bottle and Jimmy turns it up, drinks and drinks, gazing along the bottle at the far sky. He puts it down suddenly.

JIMMY. Hey! What's the North Star doing way down there?

COUNTERMAN [*looking*] Ain't that where it belongs to be?

JIMMY. It was up here a little while ago.

COUNTERMAN. My old man used to say that thing wasn't supposed to go nowhere.

Roustabouts start setting up a bally stage, rear, with a banner across the front reading "Miss Little Bo-Peep." The music switches over into Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

Jimmy examines his hands front and back, feels his forehead, leans over the counter.

JIMMY [*to the Counterman*] You think I'm getting a little thin up here?

COUNTERMAN. Well, mister, if you really want to know—

JIMMY. Thanks. Never mind. [*Turns up the bottle again*].

COUNTERMAN. If you keep your health, that's the important thing, to keep your— [*Pauses for a deep roll on the kettledrums then continues*] To keep your health.—Sounds like we going to get some rain before we through.

The music breaks off and goes into the Second movement of the Symphony as Miss Little Bo-Peep appears on the bally stage; she dances with her feet together, rocking her veiled hips in cadence to the ANDANTE CON MOTO. She is the same dancer who appeared earlier.

Jimmy and the Counterman start to examine the sky but call it off to watch Miss Little Bo-Peep.

JIMMY [*reviving*] You know, I think I got here too early. Looks like the best shows are just beginning. There wasn't much going on when I came along. [*Finishes the bottle, sets it on the counter, stands up. He brushes his coat, tries to close up the tear in his trousers which is now twice as long*] Have you got a safety pin on you?

COUNTERMAN. Safety pin!

JIMMY. Okay. [*Lets it go*] So long. I'm going back and catch a few shows I missed.

The Cop watches him. He is the same Cop but without mustaches now and dressed in a more up-to-date uniform. As Jimmy starts back the Cop blows a sharp traffic whistle.

Jimmy pays no attention and the whistle cuts through again. He looks up at the Cop standing in front of him.

COP [*jabbing a bored first finger up the line*] One way.

JIMMY. I've got to see that girl a minute, she wasn't there when I came by—

COP. One way, old soak!

JIMMY [*resentful*] Now hold on. I've had one bottle of beer.

COP [*to anybody*] Nobody ever has but "one bottle of beer." Get on with you!

JIMMY. Are you trying to insinuate—

The Cop tumbles his nightstick.

JIMMY [*throwing a covetous look at Miss Little Bo-Peep*] To insinuate—

The Cop reaches for him. Jimmy ducks and runs.

The Cop is about to pursue but the Tall Clown [who has appeared earlier] crosses in front of him. The Clown has the same pink wig but is dressed now in rubber boots and a fire-chief helmet; he carries a red bucket labeled "For

Fire Only." He is accompanied by the hunchback, Luno, with a large tin funnel.

The Cop is suspicious and pulls up to watch them.

They sneak up on a man in front of the bally stage absorbed in admiring Miss Little Bo-Peep. Luno inserts the funnel inside the man's belt-buckle and the Tall Clown pours in the bucket of water. The resulting yelps and kicks and contortions set off screams of joy in the crowd.

The Clowns throw away bucket and funnel, adding to the din, and scatter. The Cop is confused, makes a half-hearted effort to restore order then chases the man with the pants full of water.

The din fades on neatly into the Fifth Symphony as the lights dim out and Mr. Shoes looks in, right. He smiles at the audience as if somewhat embarrassed at all this horse-play but reminding them that boys will be boys and that, after all, it was pretty funny and he hopes they thought so too.

He comes forward as the house lights rise, pauses in the midst of a long drum-roll to cast a look up at the sky then takes out a pack of cards, sits on a stool at the front end of the counter and as the music ends deals himself a quiet hand of solitaire.

* * *

Mr. Shoes plays peacefully for two or three minutes, alone, picked out by a light, then the Cop wanders across, on uneventful patrol, stops, looks over Mr. Shoes's shoulder, shows him a move. Mr. Shoes nods his gratitude, makes the move.

The Pickpocket comes in behind the Cop, surveys the bulging pockets. As he makes ready to go through one of them Mr. Shoes half turns his head, wags his finger as much as to say Now-now! The Pickpocket desists, moves away sadly, goes and Mr. Shoes shakes his head at the audience with a sorrowful smile that asks them to overlook it: some-of-us-are-not-everything-we-should-be-but-after-all.

The Cop continues on his patrol and Mr. Shoes plays until there is a flash of lightning and a roll of thunder that goes on into a drum-roll in the Symphony as the music takes up from where it stopped.

He frowns at the sky, hesitates, then gathers up the cards and signals for the lights. He moves to one side to let the Roustabouts get to work on the hamburger stand.

As the house lights go down the Roustabouts rearrange the stand so that we can look out under one side of it at the rain which is about to begin.

ROUSTABOUT ONE. Going to get some rain.

ROUSTABOUT TWO. No rain tonight.

The hunchback, Luno, comes in with saw, hammer, boards, carpenter's pencil; insists on helping, getting in the way, tripping them up, extracting nails they have just driven, until one of them chases him off with a kick and he scampers up a ladder against the roof of the stand where

he squats on a rung putting on a monkey act of scratching himself under the arms and chasing things through his carrot-colored wig.

Mr. Shoes, at the side, watches him indulgently, amused at him and at the crowd's amusement, glances at his watch, reacts to the hour and signals for the rain. He goes out, left.

The rain begins to pour, pounding on the canvas with the noise of a quartet of snare drums; it drowns out the Symphony, which ends. The crowd takes shelter here and there.

Jimmy dodges in out of the rain, sinks on a stool out of breath. He takes the wristwatch from his pocket, studies it reminiscently, goes to the edge of the tent, searches with his eyes to the right and left, seems to give up but straps the watch on his wrist as if that were the next best thing.

Dr. Turnquist, with binoculars and dictaphone, limps in on a heavy stick with a rubber tip.

JIMMY [eagerly] That girl in the candy-striped dress, you haven't by chance—Your leg!

DOCTOR. I was just thinking about Saint Francis of Assisi—

JIMMY. But that bastard crippled you!

The Doctor shoos the subject away, sits down.

DOCTOR. If you think Francis just went round all day preaching to birds you're very much mistaken—

JIMMY. Look, I've been needing to ask you a question. You see, my hair is getting a little thin up here. And I'm running short of buttons. And the North Star is not where it used to be. It's time I found out a few things. For certain, I mean; not just guesses.

DOCTOR. That's a large order.

JIMMY. What I want to know is this: all my life it's been the girls that have saved me. Every time things have got just too bad, just too unspeakable—the girls have rescued me. You remember the high-diver? When I forgot what had happened to my grandfather?

DOCTOR. That's what I told you in the first place.

JIMMY. I saw somebody's arm snatched off, but I didn't just hang myself in despair because a girl—

DOCTOR. Loving Conquers—

JIMMY. But what happens when the girls will no longer bother with me?

DOCTOR. Ah!

JIMMY. Look at that through your smart binoculars!

DOCTOR. It's a considerable question.

JIMMY. Never mind the question now. What's the answer?

DOCTOR. If it had an answer it wouldn't be much of a question, would it?

JIMMY. Now don't dodge.

DOCTOR. But it has a sort of answer.

JIMMY. Sort of! [Vindictively] The truth is you don't know, isn't it?

DOCTOR. What are you going to float on when the tide begins to ebb? That's what you said, wasn't it?

JIMMY. I said—

DOCTOR. Which way do you turn when biology begins to fail you?—Well, then you turn to God. Not because God is the Next Best Thing, but because for the first time your body gets out of the light and you can see what's what.

JIMMY. That's a lot of nonsense.

DOCTOR. God is an old man's concept. You might say, "In the Fall an old man's fancy—" Not because you're getting scared, which the young men like to think, but because you're not tied up so close and you get a clearer view. The same view you probably got as an infant, though when the girls come along they take up the whole landscape and you can't see it again until they move on.

Luno, squatting on the ladder watching them, slides over a little closer. Jimmy sees him for the first time, leans toward the Doctor.

JIMMY [*looking over his shoulder*] Tell me, is that by any chance the one you called Luno? The one you threw salt at? The pretzel-maker?

DOCTOR [*absorbed in his idea*] I came across a curious little thing the other day. Everybody says that this is a materialistic age. That all we want is money to buy material things.—Not a word of truth in it. Really, we are the Cloud Dwellers. Nothing appeals to us but the non-material. Our values all end in mystery. It isn't money we want but the mystery we think the money might buy. Washing-machines? TV's? Automobiles? We buy all that only because we believe they will bring us a mysterious well-being beyond the reach of our imagination.

JIMMY [*watching Luno covertly*] I don't know about that, but—

DOCTOR. We buy land—to build a house—to shelter a family (the mystery, you see, getting deeper all the time)—to give the children some sort of mysterious well-being that we can't visualize.

JIMMY. This Luno—

DOCTOR. Materialists? We wouldn't lift a finger to gain a really concrete end. You can't stage a war in the name of anything but Liberty, Freedom, Democracy, Communism—all mysteries. We really go floating round all our days on flimsy clouds of imagination. The Cloud Floaters.

JIMMY. Listen to me a minute. I think this is the one you were particularly trying to avoid—

DOCTOR. And at the other end, in our childhood, before we ever hear of money, our values exist in kind fairies and air-borne castles and articulate animals and incredible mysterious beatitudes. And here's the pretty thing about it. The pattern.—I love a pattern.—At each end our values fade out into mystery. Which is precisely what we ourselves do—though in a somewhat clumsier way.

JIMMY. Look, that fellow's got his eye on us, keeps moving round in this direction—

DOCTOR. And of course, coming back to your question,

the girls never quite abandon you. Just as God was always there in the background when the girls were so dreadfully lovely—

Luno draws himself up.

JIMMY [*springing to his feet*] Look out!

Luno dives at the Doctor's head.

They roll to the ground, the Doctor swinging his arms and legs in wild abandon. The crowd squeals in glee, but it is no joke to the Doctor.

Jimmy jumps in to help him but in spite of both of them Luno seems to be winning. He isn't trying to strangle the Doctor but to tie his arms and legs in a knot.

DOCTOR [*gasping, desperate*] He's trying to pretzel me!

Rosemary breaks through the jubilant crowd, grabs Luno's hair in both hands, yanks. The wig comes off. She throws it away, grabs his real hair, pulls.

Luno lets out a squawk, bounds to his feet, flees in running kangaroo hops.

Sudden quiet. The Doctor lies panting on his back, arms and legs in the air like a baby's. Jimmy kneels beside him, dazed. Rosemary stands with her feet stubbornly apart, the candy-striped dress, soaked from the rain, hanging like a wet rag.

Jimmy looks up at her in disbelief. She smiles at him with a brief grimace, drops on her knees by the Doctor.

JIMMY [*to the Doctor*] Hold everything now. Let me get you some kind of bandage. He damn near pulled your ear off, do you know that?

Jimmy checks his own ears that they are tight, feels his mouth, wiggles a tooth. His hand comes off bloody.

JIMMY. And he's given me a bloody mouth.—Where can we find him a bandage? My handkerchief's a mess, my shirt's a mess—

ROSEMARY. My slip's fairly dry.

She stands, pulls up her skirt, tears off the hem of her slip.

The Doctor's moans subside as he watches her legs, cease altogether when she crouches to bandage his ear. He becomes quiet studying her shape like a patient growing slowly calm under a shot of morphine.

JIMMY [*to Rosemary*] We'll take him to the first-aid tent.—And then we'll have to find you some dry clothes.

DOCTOR [*groggily pushing an edge of the bandage out of his vision*] You couldn't find her anything more becoming than a well-soaked skirt.

ROSEMARY. Oh, that's sweet of you.

DOCTOR. Mainbocher in person couldn't do any better.

JIMMY [*annoyed at the Doctor's stare*] All right now. I don't think you're so badly hurt.

DOCTOR. And the lilies of the feel—feel? no, field—no, feel—in all their glory, were not arrayed like one of these.

ROSEMARY [*to Jimmy*] I'm afraid he's—[*Touching her forehead*].

JIMMY. He doesn't sound crazy to me.

Rosemary stands, pulls her clothing away from her, watches the Doctor.

His fingers and wrists are set at bizarre angles like the stuffed gloves of a scarecrow. He falls into a silence, his eyes turn away from Rosemary and fix on apparently nothing.

Rosemary takes Jimmy to one side.

ROSEMARY. His eyes have a ringing look as if that dwarf had pegged his doorbell.

Jimmy looks about the midway, sadly flexing his own fingers and wrists, checking his own ears. Several people in the gaping crowd do the same with theirs.

JIMMY [to the crowd] Anybody know where the first-aid tent is?

People look at each other, say nothing.

ROSEMARY. Or that medic, if we could find him.

JIMMY. It is just—just too unspeakable! [Touches her hand hanging beside his, turns to look straight at her] Or would be if it weren't for you.

The barrel-organ music comes up in a tinny but competent performance of the Andante of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in A-flat.

ROSEMARY [conscious of his gaze, attempting to straighten her hair] I look awful.

JIMMY. You look beautiful.

ROSEMARY. I look terrible. Don't look at me.—Yes, look at me.

JIMMY [he has trouble with his words] You look twice as beautiful as anything I've seen in all my days. [Feels his tooth, his bloody mouth] That may sound corny but it's the tooth—twooth—truth.

Behind their backs the Doctor rolls over, gets up on his hands and knees like a baby and crawls away dragging his stick and the dictaphone case. The binoculars are left lying on the ground.

ROSEMARY. Darling, are you hurt?

JIMMY. I feel like a phonograph with a busted pickup.

ROSEMARY. Let me see.

JIMMY [bravely] It's nothing. [Giving way] Nothing but a major tragedy!—I look for you and look and look, and then at last I find you wit' a mout' full of vlood and tears instead of love!

ROSEMARY. You've cut your lip! And your poor mouth's bleeding. And you're wet too.

JIMMY. I'm soaked to the skin! And I'm vleeding to deat! And my shirt is dirty and my pants are torn!—I've been doing this sort of thing all my life. I've prololly got poison oak too.

ROSEMARY [laughing at him] If you have I want some too.

JIMMY. I'm the guy that gets measles the day before the circus comes to town.

ROSEMARY. Let me see your mouth. [Touches his lips, whines in sympathy] Maybe the interne—Oh, the Doctor!

[Turns to look, sees that he has disappeared] Where's the Doctor?

They search about for him briefly, trying to be concerned; they aren't really much interested, have other things to think about now.

Roustabouts start setting up the car of the Ferris Wheel. One of them finds the binoculars.

JIMMY. Hey, those are mine. That is, I know who they belong to. [Roustabout gives them up reluctantly. Jimmy turns to Rosemary] He left his glasses. He'll be back.—Come on. You've got to get out of those wet clothes before you catch cold.

ROSEMARY. But what do I get into?

Jimmy puts the glasses under his arm. The music goes over into Mozart's Clarinet Concerto in A.

JIMMY. Offhand I don't quite know.

ROSEMARY. Maybe one of the strippers at the girlsque show would throw me something. [Sees the Ferris Wheel] I know! We'll dry our clothes on the Ferris Wheel. We'll tie them on the back of the seat and let them dry in the lovely wind.

JIMMY [warily] I've had bad luck with Ferris Wheels.

ROSEMARY. This one's different.

JIMMY [guarded] Would you just as soon if they made it a Paratrooper Ride instead?

ROSEMARY. Certainly, darling. I'll ride with you in anything—to any where.

JIMMY [to a Roustabout] Look, I wonder if you fellows couldn't make this a Paratrooper Ride.

ROUSTABOUT. It calls for a Wheel.

ROUSTABOUT TWO. It calls for a Wheel, Mac.

JIMMY [resigned] Okay. That's all right.

ROUSTABOUT THREE. He said make it just like the other one.

JIMMY. Okay. Thanks.

ROSEMARY. It'll be all right, darling. It'll be the same and different too. We'll ride among the paradoxes. [Cocks her head at the clarinet] Drying our clothes in the woodwinds.

Jimmy buys tickets as before. She sits on the step, pulls off shoes and stockings, takes his hand. They get into the car. She peels the dress over her head, sits beside him in the torn slip, holds the dress over the side as the lights dim and the car simulates rising.

JIMMY. It is different. Before—

ROSEMARY [dismissing it] Before is over.

JIMMY [admiring her] I think you have no sense of modesty because you have no sense of evil.

ROSEMARY. I'm a very modest person!

JIMMY. I'll bet you never pull the shades down.

ROSEMARY. Shades down? Why should I? There's nothing I'm ashamed of.

JIMMY [laughing] I knew you didn't.

ROSEMARY. And anyway I always keep a bra and pants on until I put out the light.

JIMMY. Yes, but—

ROSEMARY. That's more than some bathing suits.

JIMMY. Yes, but the circumstances—

ROSEMARY. Don't be silly. Why should anybody want to see me undress? And even if they saw me, what harm would that do to me?

JIMMY. Eve in the Garden before the days of the Serpent! A plane flying by remote control! [Embraces her] Take me with you.

The siren, distant, of an ambulance rises up through the music, falls. They pay no attention.

ROSEMARY. I'll kiss you softly, Jimmy, on account of your poor wounded mouth.—Jimmy, Jim, James.—Darling, you're much too handsome for "Jimmy."

JIMMY. I love you for thinking so—among the other "for's."

ROSEMARY. James?

JIMMY. I'm not up to "James."

ROSEMARY. Jim, then.

JIMMY [*considering it*]. I think I can handle "Jim" if you like. And you will be "Rosemary—that's-for-remembrance."

ROSEMARY [*kisses him*]. That's for remembrance—Jim. How does it feel to be Jim?

JIMMY. It feels like a new suit. Like a boo blow tie—a blue bow tie.

The ambulance siren comes in again, closer.

ROSEMARY. Our poor wounded lip! When we get down I'm going to fix your lip.

JIMMY [*lying*]. It's practically well.

ROSEMARY. And I'll borrow an iron from one of the girlesque girls and press your trousers. And press my dress. And the world will be flawless and beautiful.

JIMMY. It already is.—What did you do with all the flaws?

ROSEMARY. And I'll press your shirt too. I would do so many things for you I don't know one thing I wouldn't do.—Oh, we're coming down.

JIMMY [*looks over the side*]. If 'at's the am'ulance may-be 'at interne can put a couple of stitches in my words.

ROSEMARY. I can understand them perfectly.

JIMMY. And if he has time maybe he can darn my t'ousers too.

ROSEMARY. I can darn your t'ousers.

The siren cuts off altogether, the lights come up. They get ready to leave the car. The Interne with his black satchel walks across rear; they don't see him.

ROSEMARY. I'll go borrow a needle and thread.

They leave the car, Jimmy with the binoculars in his hand by the strap.

JIMMY. Be careful, darling.

ROSEMARY. I'll meet you right here. [*Sits for a second on the Coca-Cola crate*] I'll meet you exactly here.

She starts to go. The music comes up in the Lament from "Orpheus," J'ai perdu mon Eurydice.

JIMMY [*overtaking her*]. Watch it now. Demons are on the loose in this place.

ROSEMARY [*laughing, kisses him*]. Back in a minute.

JIMMY. The air is singing with stray bullets like a May morning.

Roustabouts, waiting to dismantle the Ferris Wheel, watch them, disgusted at the sentimentality.

While Jimmy embraces her the Interne looks back in, no satchel, whistles at the Roustabouts, beckons. Two of them follow the Interne out.

ROSEMARY. Let me go while my courage is still fresh.

She breaks away bravely, runs. He watches her disappear, stands for a minute looking after her.

The Interne comes in with his satchel, sets it down to light a cigarette. Jimmy sees him, comes back to earth, approaches him.

JIMMY. Look, are you any good at this sort of thing? [*Pushing up his lip*] There's a hole in here like the Grand Canyon.

The Interne twists up Jimmy's lip, squints into his mouth through the cigarette smoke.

INTERNE. Hhm. Uhm. Ahn. Ohn.—You better come round to the shop. I'll give you a lift in the meat wagon if you don't mind riding with a stiff.

The two Roustabouts cross, rear, with a stretcher and a blanketed form, dictaphone case on the chest. Jimmy stares, shaken, leans against a support. The Interne picks up his satchel, takes a few steps.

JIMMY [*stricken*]. I know that man!

INTERNE [*about to go*]. Coming, mister?

Jimmy sinks down on the crate, head in hands. The Interne shrugs, goes out after the stretcher. In a minute the siren comes up, drowning out the "Orpheus," fades away into the barrel-organ music of the song.

SINGER [*off*]. Like as the Waves Make Towards the Pebbled Shore,

So Do Our Minutes Hasten to Their End—

Jimmy lifts his head to listen, binoculars in his hand.

SINGER. Each Changing Place With That Which Goes Before,

In Sequent Toil All Forwards Do Contend—

Jimmy is somewhat consoled, stands. Young Man Three with much the appearance of Jimmy at the beginning [played by the actor who took the part of the young Jimmy] touches him wistfully on the shoulder.

YOUNG MAN THREE. I wonder if you could tell me, sir—

JIMMY. Listen, son, that's just what I've been trying to find out myself.

YOUNG MAN THREE [*annoyed, turning away*]. Old men! They never tell.

JIMMY. Wait a minute. [*Hangs the binoculars on his neck*] There are a few slim truths crisscrossing the holes.

YOUNG MAN THREE [*coming back*]. That's what I want to know.

JIMMY. The trick is to make yourself bigger than the holes and you'll be all right. [To himself] She ought to be getting back now.

YOUNG MAN THREE [truculently] Okay sir, just name me one slim truth.

JIMMY [looking at the spot where Rosemary disappeared] I can name you one slim truth. Love never lies. If love sees it, it's there. If love says so, that's the way it is.

YOUNG MAN THREE [sarcastic] I thought love was blind.

JIMMY. Don't you believe it, boy. Love's about as blind as these glasses.

May stops behind them.

MAY. May I—

JIMMY [ignoring her] As a young roe skipping upon the hills. As a young hart feeding among the lilies.—What's happened to her!

MAY. May I have your—

YOUNG MAN THREE. Push on, sister. We're tied up with something important here.

MAY. What's your idea of "important," junior?

Jimmy stands, looks anxiously up and down the midway. The Cop wanders in and Jimmy approaches him. The Young Man comes too.

JIMMY [to the Cop] Please, where's the Lost and Found Department?

COP [eying Jimmy's rents and smudges] Why? Are you lost?

The Lament from "Orpheus" comes up briefly into the carnival sounds.

JIMMY. I've lost a girl in a candy-striped dress.

COP. Shove off, Mac.

JIMMY. She should have been back here long before this.

The Cop turns his back, more interested in May. Jimmy gets up on the crate to see better.

MAY [to Jimmy, lifting her skirt] May I have your attention a moment, dad?

Jimmy doesn't respond, studying the midway and May moves off indignantly to the Young Man.

MAY. All right, junior, if you insist.

YOUNG MAN THREE [trying to speak angrily but unable to] You've interrupted everything. Just as we were about to—

He stops as May gives him the look.

MAY. I'm speaking to you in code now.

They move off together.

Jimmy gets down from the crate and, still searching, takes a step or two down the midway, left. The Cop whistles through his teeth and Jimmy halts, considers, nods resignedly, turns round. The Cop taps a bored first finger in the other direction.

JIMMY. I know! I know!

COP. Keep moving, Mac.

JIMMY [angry] Don't rush me.

Jimmy walks to a corner of a booth, leans against it defiant, watching the Cop. Roustabouts start setting up two bally stages at the rear and the Cop joins them.

A cheerful old blind woman approaches Jimmy, tapping with a stick. She senses him, halts.

JIMMY. I think I'm going to smash my fist in that cop's ugly face and call it a day.

BLIND WOMAN [alarmed] Oh don't do that.

JIMMY. I've lost a friend back there and this cop—
The voice of the Singer, accompanied on a concertina, comes in from up the midway, closer.

SINGER. Let Me Confess that we Two Must be Twain—

BLIND WOMAN. Listen to the Sweet Singer.

SINGER. Although our Undivided Loves are One—

BLIND WOMAN. When things get bad, real bad, if I can just hear the Singer singing. When I lost my sight, at first I wanted to die, then, listening to the Singer—

They listen. Jimmy is consoled.

SINGER. So Shall Those Blots That Do With Me
Remain,

Without Thy Help, By Me Be Borne Alone—

BLIND WOMAN. You feeling better now?

Mr. Shoes comes in, idly checks the setting up of the bally stages. He is at the back, standing familiarly with the Sword-swallower. The Sword-swallower [played by the actor who took the part of the Strongman] is bare chested, a bright carving knife tucked carelessly under one arm. Jimmy hasn't seen them yet.

JIMMY. I feel whittled down and miserable. I feel like a two-by-four that's been dressed down by the sanding machine to a one-and-five-eighths-by-three-and-a-half though still trading as a two-by-four.

BLIND WOMAN. You live longer if you're thin. My husband weighed two hundred and fourteen and he's been gone.

JIMMY. There's that Mr. Shoes. You know, it's got so I hate to see that man come around.

BLIND WOMAN. Oh Mr. Shoes is a nice man. He owns the whole thing, I understand. Or a good part of it.

JIMMY. It doesn't look like anybody owned it. It looks like just a lot of nogood cheap concessions to me.

BLIND WOMAN. But the concessionaires get the concessions from Mr. Shoes.

JIMMY. Where does he get them?

BLIND WOMAN. Well, I don't know that.

JIMMY [contemptuous] Sword-swallower! Who cares whether he guzzles that knife or not?

BLIND WOMAN. Oh I wish I could see the Sword-swallower!

JIMMY. I've seen some terrible things happen round here. Shoes ought to have about three times as many cops, for one thing.—Excuse me, I've been trying to catch that man for a long time. [Calls] Oh, Mr. Shoes!

Mr. Shoes pats the Sword-swallower, wanders out before Jimmy can reach him.

A Barker [who is the Striker Boss and the Ticket Seller we have seen earlier] mounts the left bally stage. The Sword-swallower hops up beside him, takes a professional stance.

BARKER. Ladies and Gentlemen!—With your kind approval—we present—for your pleasure [*only the Blind Woman pays any attention*—the extreme and absolute limit of sensationalism—the death-defying sword-swallowing Major Kwantamaru of the Imperial Sumatran Guards—

The Sword-swallower holds up the knife, puts an inch or two teasingly down his throat, takes it out. Nobody looks.

BARKER [*in his natural voice, to the Sword-swallower*] They're dead tonight, Major.

SWORD-SWALLOWER. Get Doris.

The Barker goes to the back of the bally stage, looks over.

BARKER. Doris! Get Doris!—Get the hell up here, Doris [*Gives Doris a hand up*].

Doris [who is Miss Little Bo-Peep, etc.] in harem pants now and half a dozen necklaces, takes a hand-on-hip pose at one side, gazing disdainfully over the heads of the crowd.

BARKER [*to the midway*] And—the Major's lovely little barefoot daughter, Jodhpur!—Don't catch cold now, honey.

The crowd begins to take notice.

Jimmy watches it all disdainfully as the music of the concertina comes up close and the Singer wanders in without fanfare, singing to his own accompaniment as if for the mere joy of singing, a thin middle-aged man, somewhat wistful.

SINGER. It Was a Lordling's Daughter,
The Fairest One of Three—

Doris begins to oscillate to the tune and the crowd closes in. The Singer mounts the second bally stage. Nobody gives him a glance.

SINGER. That Lik-ed of Her Master
As Well As Well Might Be,
Till Looking on An Englishman,
The Fairest That Eye Could See,
Her Fancy Fell a Turning—

During the song Mort takes up a position on the ground between the bally stages, just visible beyond Doris's bare feet.

Jimmy sees him, reacts, studies the scene—the Sword-swallower, the Barker, Doris, the Singer—goes to the Cop, points at Mort.

JIMMY [*to the Cop*] That's him!
The Cop is more interested in Doris.

SINGER. Long Was the Combat Doubtful
That Love With Love Did Fight,
To Leave The Master Loveless,
Or Kill The Gallant Knight—

JIMMY [*to the Cop, excited*] You see him? I've been chasing that fellow all night. That man's dangerous.

COP [*indifferent*] What's the matter with him?

JIMMY. He's a troublemaker, that's what's the matter with him!

COP. You making the trouble.

JIMMY. Maybe he's after the Major, you can't tell. Maybe he's after that girl. He's after somebody, I know it—

COP [*losing patience*] Maybe he's going to take after you, Cap, and save me doing it myself.

Jimmy leaves him, works in closer.

Mort climbs up on the first bally stage from the back, squats, eyes fixed on the Sword-swallower pushing the knife slowly down his gullet.

Jimmy is tense, looks round; something must be done.

JIMMY [*to a Roustabout*] Hey, that damn clown. I know that fellow and he's getting ready—

The Roustabout picks up the crate, takes it off.

SINGER. Thus Art With Arms Contending
Was Victor Of The Day,
Which By A Gift Of Learning
Did Bear The Maid Away;
Then, Lullaby, The Learned Man
Hath Got The Lady Gay—

The Sword-swallower finishes his act, puts on a theatrical withdrawal of the knife, holds it aloft in the trouper's flourish of triumph.

Mort prances in, lifts the knife out of the Major's hand in the manner of a burlesque valet, strikes a pose, takes a bow. The crowd is amused.

Mort suddenly changes, turns dangerous. He crouches, looks about him, runs to the edge of the bally stage, great white feet flapping, leaps on to the Singer's stage. The crowd blinks, laughs tentatively, confused, not sure but this may be part of the fun. When Mort lands at the Singer's feet in a comic heap the laugh bursts out in relief.

The Singer ignores him, continues, repeating the line.

SINGER. Then, Lullaby, The Learned Man
Hath Got The Lady Gay,
And Now My Song Is Ended—

The "ended" rises up in a short screech as Mort puts the knife into the Singer's lifted neck. The concertina squeals, a clarinet, off, picks up the note in trills. As the Singer crumples up, Mort, knife in the air, leaps straight off the stage at Jimmy.

The music breaks. There is a sudden stupefied silence. Everybody freezes, Jimmy with the rest.

Mort charges at Jimmy, turns, dodges past. Jimmy, recovering, pursues him, grabs the polkadot collar. Mort whirls about, whips the knife across Jimmy's belly. Jimmy falls and the lights go black.

In the dark the crowd, after a moment's stunned apathy, squeals like the concertina, and the clarinet takes the note up and down the scale in the virtuoso runs of an 18th Century Cadenza. As quiet returns, the clarinet goes on into the slow movement of the Mozart Concerto and the

oval of large blue five-pointed stars emerges in the sky, rotating slowly as before.

The music continues tranquilly for a minute or two in the dark, then a light picks up Mr. Shoes as he enters, right front. He comes on thoughtfully, hands behind his back, newspaper under his arm.

He is a little embarrassed, like a parent approaching an interview with an offspring on the facts-of-life. He stops, glances at the audience, shakes his head as if to say Sorry, but that's the way the cards seem to fall. He looks up at the oval of stars, gestures tentatively. He seems about to elaborate a little, then he thinks better of it, turns to the wings and waves the paper in a signal for lights as much as to say Let's get on with it.

The music cuts off, the lights come up and he goes out, left.

The lights show the Interne sitting tailor-fashion on the ground, left front, stitching industriously at Jimmy's abdomen. The binoculars are lying out on one side of Jimmy and a dirty old white-top navy cap is lying upside down a little farther away. Jimmy is very low but is coming round.

JIMMY [weakly] Where the hell am I?—What are you doing to me?

INTERNE. Almost got it now, old-timer. Hold still.

JIMMY. What are you doing?

INTERNE. I'm putting a slight tuck in you.

JIMMY. Oh! Oh, I remember now.—That thread you've got, she went to look for a needle and thread like that.

INTERNE [busy] It's the best thread. Catgut.

JIMMY [rousing] Where is she?

INTERNE. Where's who, pops?

JIMMY. Rose—Mary—May—Rose—Rosemary! Rosemary, that's for remembrance.

The Interne bites the thread with his front teeth tailor-fashion, sticks the needle in a pin-cushion, starts putting it all away in his satchel.

JIMMY. She was here a few minutes ago. Went to borrow a needle. She was coming right back. But she didn't come—

INTERNE [professionally reassuring] Don't you worry now, dad. We'll find her for you. You just be quiet a little bit.

JIMMY. You're handing me a lot of guff, but I mean it. I want that girl.

Interne. What's she look like?

JIMMY. Look like! Like a fountain of spices, a well of living waters.

INTERNE. Young girl?

May comes in, left, glances down at Jimmy, starts to hurry on, looks at the Interne, comes back.

JIMMY. Of course she's young! An orchard of young pomegranates—

MAY. Doctor, may I have—

INTERNE. Your name Rosemary?

MAY. My name's May. But, doctor—

INTERNE. This the one, dad?

JIMMY [Shakes his head without looking] That's not the one.

INTERNE [to May] You know him?

MAY. Never saw him before. But, doctor, there's something wrong with my—

INTERNE. Just a minute now. I want to give him a transfusion.

Rosemary comes in, left front, much older now; the candy stripes faded out into gray ones. She carries a sewing basket.

She glances down at Jimmy in a repetition of May's action, but doesn't go on, kneels beside him. There is no recognition between her and Jimmy; she kneels in a sort of generalized compassion.

INTERNE [to Rosemary] You can help us here, ma'am, if you will.

ROSEMARY. I'll help you. Certainly.

INTERNE. Lift up his head. I'm going to give him a transfusion.

The Interne lights two cigarettes, puts one in Jimmy's mouth like a thermometer. A Roustabout rolls in an empty rootbeer barrel, goes on, and the Interne stands it on end, slaps his handkerchief across the barrel head.

INTERNE [to May] Come here, precious. Sit over here a minute, will you. It won't take long.

May sits on the barrel, crosses her knees, accepts the other cigarette from him with an oblique up-smile.

MAY. When you get through here, doctor, there's something I want to—

INTERNE. Just a minute now. Put your pretty little mind on this. The old guy's weak, see? Lost a lot of blood.

MAY. Suppose I'm not the right Type, doctor? Suppose I'm RH Negative?

INTERNE. You test out Positive all right.—Now pull yourself together a little.

May draws herself up expertly, settles the waist of her jacket against her with two or three rolling motions of her palms.

The Interne drops on his knees, takes Jimmy's wrist professionally under his fingers. He turns Jimmy's head in May's direction, nods to May, who starts a steady revivifying gaze into Jimmy's eyes. The Interne scrutinizes him intently.

Jimmy's eyes are half closed. His pulse seems to react and the Interne, concerned, holds Jimmy's eyelids wider apart with his finger and thumb. After a minute Jimmy blinks, lifts his head and the Interne relaxes.

INTERNE. Little better?

JIMMY. I just felt a noise inside me—like when the oil burner—kicks on.

The Interne hooks his stethoscope in his ears, pads about on Jimmy's stomach and chest, wags his head encouragingly. He hangs the tongs on his neck, stares into Jimmy's pupils with an ophthalmoscope.

INTERNE. Good. That's good. [To May] All right, sweetness, that'll do.

MAY [standing] Doctor—

INTERNE. Just wait over there and I'll be with you in a second.

May withdraws and the Interne checks Jimmy again with the stethoscope, wads up the tubes and stuffs them in his breast pocket. He and Rosemary prop Jimmy's shoulders against the barrel.

INTERNE [loading his satchel] Now you take it easy for a little bit, pops, and you're going to be all right. This lady's going to stay with you for a while.

ROSEMARY [to the Interne] I can't stay very long. My daughter's getting married. I just happened to be passing and I saw he was in trouble and I felt sorry—

INTERNE. Just a little while. Just to get him on his feet. [To Jimmy, fetching the cap] Here, put your cap on. It's getting chilly.

JIMMY. That's not my cap.

INTERNE. Put it on anyhow. It's turning cool. [Jimmy puts it on] Looks good.

JIMMY [much stronger] Listen, doc. I sure do thank you. I thought that was the end of the streetcar line.

INTERNE [patting his shoulder] I'll drop in on you later.

The Interne zippers up his satchel, stands, shakes out his crotch, snaps Jimmy a finger-thumb circle, joins May. They go out, right.

The Merry-go-Round music comes up, quiet, [in a different direction from before]. Rosemary puts on glasses, takes sewing out of the basket, starts to roll-and-whip a lace edging.

JIMMY [watching her] That lace reminds me of something. But I can't think what. The pattern of it, loops inside of loops inside of loops.

ROSEMARY. It's pretty lace, isn't it? For my daughter's trousseau.—Maybe it reminds you of when you were getting married.

JIMMY [goodnaturedly] How do you know I ever got married?

ROSEMARY. Oh, you look like somebody that's been married.

JIMMY [laughingly] I do?

ROSEMARY. You can tell when somebody's been in love. Unfolded, sort of.—Not now, maybe. You've got too many buttons missing!

JIMMY. So you can read a man's history in his folds and his buttons.

ROSEMARY. And his ravels and splits and patches. Yes, maybe.

JIMMY. You're very good with a needle and thread. [Laughs] You and that medic. My wife was very good too. That's who I was talking about, half groggy that way.—You know, that bastard sure cut me.

ROSEMARY. You're lucky to be here. Anybody is, I guess.

JIMMY. I'm feeling pretty good now. Thanks to you and the doc.

ROSEMARY. Don't forget the doctor's assistant.

JIMMY. The Laboratory Technician—no. What did she say her name was?

ROSEMARY. I didn't hear.

JIMMY [studying the lace] What's your daughter's name?

ROSEMARY [smiling at the thought] Mary.

Jimmy watches her face for a moment as if he might be connecting, then dismisses it, smiles.

JIMMY. Thinking of your daughter is becoming to you.

ROSEMARY. Is it?—She's a good girl. Young of course but—you learn. What you're going to learn.

JIMMY. My wife was a wonderful woman. About your size. Real courage. I've seen her tear in and fight for somebody like a wildcat.

ROSEMARY. My husband had courage too.

JIMMY. Had? Are you a—widow?

ROSEMARY. Well—you see, my husband left me. Or perhaps I should say we separated. I guess I'm a—desertee.

JIMMY [sympathetic] That's in it too.

ROSEMARY. It was hard for a while, then, later, it was all right. It was a long time ago. You forget.

JIMMY. Indeed you do!—Or think you do. I believe I must have forgotten more than any man alive. I remember plenty but I have a feeling I've forgotten a thousand to one. And I've begun to wonder if it makes much difference to you whether you forget something or not. If it happened to you it's part of you, part of your Gross Estate, as the tax people like to say. It's what you're "worth." Maybe trying to remember too much is miserly, like the old man in the nursery tales always counting his money and never spending any. [Glances at Rosemary, finds her sewing, only half listening, changes the subject] You know, I'm getting hungry. I used to know an old fellow who said When in doubt put something in the stomach.—How about joining me in a dish of fried shrimp?

ROSEMARY [putting her work aside] I'll get it for you.

JIMMY. Oh I can get it! I feel fine. I think I'm better than ever.

ROSEMARY [standing up] Famous last words!

JIMMY [laughing] Thanks for taking so much trouble with me. It's very kind of you.

ROSEMARY. Not at all.—You remind me just a little of somebody I knew once. Not the way you look, but something. He was taller than you, and heavier. [Smiles] Not that I wouldn't get you something to eat anyhow.

She goes off, right.

Roustabouts start setting up a length of chain-link fence, high, barbed wire at the top. It crosses about halfway back. Beyond it are two bally stages and part of the midway, semi-dark.

An Old Man comes in, left, stops beside Jimmy.

OLD MAN. They always talking about "in the long run." But, brother, it ain't a long run. You see that man playing solitaire down there where those leaves are burning? Nobody's ever run longer than that.

JIMMY [*sniffing, turning to look*] I believe I do smell leaves burning.

The Merry-go-Round music comes up louder. The Trumpet Player takes a practice run up and down the scale, mounts one of the bally stages.

Jimmy retrieves the binoculars, looks through them at the midway beyond the fence.

Lights come up on the bally stages and the Trumpet Player bats out a loud cadenza, breaking off to shake the spit out of his horn then going on into an obligato for a Dancing Girl [*the same as earlier, dancing the same dance*].

On the other stage a Bloutorch Man [*he is the Swordswallower, the Strongman, etc.*] is pushing balls of flame into his mouth.

Jimmy rolls over on his stomach, gets to his knees, to his feet, moves round experimentally. He seems to be all right; a little stiffer, a little more bent. He hangs the glasses on his neck, goes over, gazes through the meshes of the fence. The Old Man watches him.

JIMMY. Looks like things are just beginning to get going over there.

OLD MAN. They got no idea of closing down.

A bareheaded clown in a phosphorescent toupee strolls in beyond the fence. When he meets a pretty girl he makes the wig jump into the air with a whee! and spin round on a stick like a pinwheel. He stops in front of the Dancing Girl, wig spinning. Everybody enjoys it.

JIMMY. Looks like the girls are prettier than they used to be.

OLD MAN. Yes, the girls get prettier every year.

JIMMY [*examining the fence*] Maybe we can climb this thing and get over there.

OLD MAN [*throws up his hands in horror*] Brother!

JIMMY. Well, you see, I know so much more now than I did then. [*The Old Man goes out, right, while Jimmy is talking*] I could really take care of the situation now. I could—

He stops to stare at a girl in a candy-striped dress licking an ice cream cone. She is Mary [played by the actress who took the part of Rosemary as a young girl]. The clown passes her, spins the wig. She laughs. Jimmy hangs on the fence, unable to speak for a minute.

JIMMY [*calling her*] Rosemary! [*She continues to watch the clown, enjoying the show*] Rosemary!

She looks toward the fence, puzzled, sees him, approaches, frankly, no wariness.

JIMMY. You are Rosemary.

MARY. Oh, I thought you said "Mary."

JIMMY. You're not Rosemary?

MARY. I'm Mary.

JIMMY [*crestfallen*] Mary—Rosemary—May. [*Remembers*] You are Mary!

MARY [*getting impatient*] I heard somebody. I thought they must want something—

JIMMY. I do want something.—I want to say something.

MARY [*looking behind her*] Yes, sir?

JIMMY [*fumbling*] I don't know—I don't know exactly how to put it. I was right where you are once. No time ago.—You can't believe that, can you? It's just impossible, isn't it?

MARY. Well—

JIMMY. There was so much I didn't know. I thought if somebody would just pass out a few answers. My grandfather wouldn't tell. Or couldn't. I knew a doctor—an RGD, a specialist on Things in General. He always seemed about to tell. But never did.

MARY [*eyes wandering*] I'm waiting for somebody—

JIMMY. But I can tell you a few things.

MARY. What sort of things?

JIMMY [*smiling, a far-away look*] In Nature's great book of infinite secrecy, a little I can read.

MARY. I'm meeting somebody—

JIMMY. I mean you pick up a few things as you go along, but you never get hold of them in time to use them yourself.

MARY [*licking the ice cream uncomfortably, moving back from the fence*] I'm afraid I must go now—

JIMMY [*eagerly*] You remember it says, "In the beginning was the word and the word was God."—Well, that sounded crazy to me at twenty-one. Just completely without sense. And I threw it out the window, with a lot of other things.—But, you know, it's not as crazy as it sounds. [*Earnestly, trying to hold her*] Because language is the mark of mankind. There was no mankind until there was a word. When there was a word there was a thought, and when there was a thought there was a man. And—listen to this—maybe the word he thought was "God." By God! Maybe—

A Young Man [the same as Young Man Three, etc.] runs up beside her, grasps her waist between his hands, holds her off, feasting on each separate feature of her face.

MARY. Darling! It's been so long!

She throws her arms round him and he whirls her about, ecstatic.

JIMMY. Maybe—maybe—[*They embrace, oblivious, and Jimmy, persistent, raises his voice*] This may help you out too, son. Draw up that box there for both of you to sit on, this may take me a minute or two.—What I'm getting at is, there are places out on the frontiers of thinking where physics and metaphysics get to look like the same thing. God likes to walk among the paradoxes—

They wander away toward the Merry-go-Round music, arms about each other.

Jimmy knocks up his cap, watches them go, exasperated

to about the extent you would be trying to put a halter on an unresponsive yearling.

Roustabouts start setting up the base of a Hi-Striker on this side of the fence and Jimmy turns round at the sounds, glances at them, sits down on the barrel, massages his knees. He is tired.

Two Old Men hobble past in front of him, a Boy on a crutch trailing them by a yard or so trying to listen to what they say. Jimmy pays no attention to them.

OLD MAN ONE. The fittest survive, they say. But the fittest for what, for God's sake? For survival! Mere survival. [Pops a pill into his mouth, gulps, shakes his finger] But what about the qualities of high value with a low survival rating? What about—

The Old Men go on and the Boy comes over beside Jimmy.

BOY. That ain't what I want to know.

JIMMY. What do you want to know? It's all perfectly simple. One may be distressed but there's no need to be confused.

BOY [scratches his head] Well, it's hard to say—

JIMMY. I'll tell you about the losts.

BOY. The what?

JIMMY. The losts. The l-o-s-t-s. [The Boy watches him skeptically and Jimmy looks off, continues, half to himself] The Captain—so long ago I can hardly remember anything but "Jimmy-boy." The Doctor What's-his-name, overtaken by the very one he was trying to outrun. The Singer [holds his eyes for a second] torn through the very nest and egg of his song.—All of them I loved, in a span that's been a weave of loves. The girls in cotton and the girls in silk and the girls in music. [Smiling] And the girls in nothing. Love them still. And will go on loving them until my special end has been designed, perfected and at last delivered at my door—custom-made, no doubt, to fit my largest fear.

BOY. No sir, that ain't what I mean either—

JIMMY. And if you ask yourself what it all comes to—son, now hear this—what the big total is, it seems to be zero. It seems to add up to zero, just as it seems to divide out to zero when you ask where it all comes from. Though you know perfectly well—your pistils and your stamens know—that you can prove that isn't so if you can only remember what's just underneath your memory.—It's a little hard to say but you see what I mean.

Jimmy is cut off by the "bong!" of the Hi-Striker bell as a Marine Corporal [the same as the Sailor] swings the mallet. There is a flutter of applause and Jimmy and the Boy turn toward it.

JIMMY. Isn't that a Hi-Striker?

BOY. Yes sir, it is.

JIMMY. Well I'll be dog gone!—Looks like this thing's getting round to where we started.

They watch while the Marine gets his cigar, sticks it in

his teeth. His girl lights it for him, he gives her a puff, she chokes.

JIMMY [a glint in his eye] You know, I made a fool of myself once with one of those damn things.

He watches the Marine wander off with the girl, sits up on the barrel, flexes his shoulder muscles as the Striker Boss [the same as the Barker, the Ticket Seller, etc.] takes up his spiel.

STRIKER BOSS. Step right up, boys! Don't be shy—

JIMMY. The carney gyped me out of my cigar and I didn't know how to handle it. I know now what I did wrong. I could handle it now. [Stretches his arms] You don't usually get a chance to straighten out something you did wrong.

STRIKER BOSS. All right, boys, all right!—What are you made of—

JIMMY [stands up, hands over the binoculars] Hold my glasses for me, son.

BOY. You going to swing it?

JIMMY. I just hope to goodness he tries that thing again about my cigar.

STRIKER BOSS. Show the little woman what you've got in your pants, if anything—I mean, up your sleeve—

Jimmy shoulders his way into the group about the Hi-Striker, reaches for the mallet.

JIMMY. Let me see the hammer. [To the Boy] You can't make a fool of a man twice.

STRIKER BOSS. Here he is! Here he is! Let him through, boys and girls! Here's the man!—Yes sir! That'll cost you a dime-ten-cents, mister, two for a quarter.

JIMMY [reaching into his pocket] Here's your quarter, give me two.—Let me have that thing.

The Striker Boss passes him the mallet, Jimmy takes hold of it, can hardly lift it.

STRIKER BOSS [grinning] Kind of heavy for you, ain't it, pops?

JIMMY. Let me worry about that. You just worry about getting the cigars.

STRIKER BOSS. They making them heavier than they used to, ain't they, pops?

JIMMY [looking round at the crowd with a grin] The heavier they come, the harder they hit. [To May, standing near by looking at herself in the mirror of her purse] May I have your attention a moment please, Miss? [May glances up, studies him, snaps purse, goes.]

Jimmy laughs, turns back to the job. He looks up the wire, licks one palm, smacks it across the other, grips the handle. The young men in the crowd nudge each other.

YOUNG MAN. You got a doctor's certificate, dad?

JIMMY [annoyed] Don't you worry about that, sonny-boy! You just mind your own doctor's certificates.—And you'd better not miss a treatment or you'll have to start all over again!

ANOTHER YOUNG MAN. That's telling him, grandpa!

JIMMY [to the crowd] That ought to hold him a while.

YOUNG MAN. Swing it, daddyo!

JIMMY. I'll swing it, son. Don't you worry about that. I'll swing it just as soon as I'm good and ready to swing it. [*Leans the mallet against him, unstraps the wristwatch, puts it in his pocket*] Don't worry so much about things don't concern you. You live longer that way.

Mr. Shoes looks in round an edge of the crowd, smiles, goes on. Jimmy doesn't see him.

JIMMY. Now I'm ready.

Jimmy plants his feet, takes a deep breath, heaves the mallet. The chaser jumps a few yards up the wire, comes down. Everybody laughs. Jimmy speechless, stares up and down the pole.

JIMMY [*indignant*] There's something screwy about this thing.

STRIKER BOSS [*reaching for the mallet*] All right, pops. You've had your fun.

JIMMY. Wait a minute. I've got another shot.

STRIKER BOSS. Okay, mister. I'm going to let you have two shots for a quarter just like I said. That'll be two bits, one quarter.

Rosemary comes back with a plate of shrimp and an ice cream cone, goes up to Jimmy who is frowning uncertainly at the Striker-Boss.

JIMMY. I thought I paid you.

Everybody laughs.

STRIKER BOSS. Here's your dime back. Give me a quarter. Or just two bits if you ain't got a quarter.

JIMMY [*digging into his pocket*] If there's something the matter with this pole I'm going to report it to the front office—

ROSEMARY [*putting a hand on Jimmy's arm, laughing in a kindly way*] Come on, you old fool.

JIMMY. Either there's something the matter with this damn pole or there's something the matter with me, and I know it's not me.

ROSEMARY. Come on, before your shrimp get cold.

JIMMY. Why, I've rung those bells the odd time!

ROSEMARY [*drawing him out of the circle*] Maybe it's broken. What do you care?

JIMMY [*still burned up*] It ought to be reported. I didn't pay good money to be made a monkey out of.—They've got a sort of foot brake under there they can step on, keep the thing from going up the wire. [*Takes the paper plate of shrimp.*]

ROSEMARY. Quit worrying. Eat your shrimp, then we'll get some coffee.

They move to one side and Jimmy composes himself, picks up a shrimp in his fingers.

Roustabouts start dismantling the Hi-Striker.

JIMMY [*passing her the plate*] Have one. You aren't going to make me dine alone, are you?

ROSEMARY. I'm having ice cream.

She licks the ice cream cone, Jimmy watching her.

JIMMY. I always associate those things with somebody

I knew way long ago. The girl I was telling you about.—She was the prettiest thing I ever saw in my life. Particularly when she was licking an ice cream cone.

ROSEMARY. And getting prettier all the time, I bet.

JIMMY. I used to say to myself—I wouldn't have said it to her, you know; you can't say that sort of thing to anybody's face—I used to say this girl has the beauty that truth has. Imagine saying to a girl, "Honey, you're as beautiful as truth."—She'd slap your ears off.

ROSEMARY. Some would, some wouldn't.

A Roustabout guides in the Old Man Jimmy talked to at the fence, rearranges the barrel, sets up the Coca-Cola crate beside it, seats the Old Man on the crate. Jimmy watches absent-mindedly.

JIMMY. She had the beauty that virtues have.—Vice can be beautiful too, make no mistake about that, but it's a quicker beauty. Comes quicker, goes quicker. Virtues are beautiful for a long time. Maybe for all time.

Mr. Shoes looks in at the Old Man sitting on the crate staring at nothing. He beckons to the Roustabout, hands him the deck of cards out of his pocket, wiggles his finger to give them to the Old Man. He waits until the Old Man gets them and starts dealing them out on the barrel in a game of solitaire.

Jimmy doesn't see this. Rosemary sees some of it, watches Mr. Shoes as he goes, not too happy about it. Jimmy sees his back as he disappears.

JIMMY. Wasn't that Mr. Shoes?

ROSEMARY [*ignoring it*] You say "virtues." How do you know what virtues are?

JIMMY. You can tell. Maybe the things that have been beautiful for the longest time—loyalty—kindness—courage. This girl had them all.

Behind them Mort comes in on elaborate tiptoe, white shoes flapping, a large old-fashioned slapstick on his shoulder like a gun. He pays no attention to either of them, apparently stalking the Old Man on the crate. Some of the crowd eye him with a tensing amusement but neither Jimmy nor Rosemary sees him.

ROSEMARY [*teasing Jimmy*] You couldn't be dreaming, could you—old man?

JIMMY [*indignant*] Dreaming nothing! This girl gave me—here, hold these shrimp a minute—gave me a watch once. I've got it right here in my pocket—

Jimmy sees Mort, freezes, hand in his pocket; he is half turned away from Rosemary.

Rosemary is staring at Jimmy, open-mouthed, comprehending.

ROSEMARY [*softly*] Not—a—wrist—watch!

Jimmy takes a step or two after Mort, not knowing just what to do. Mort continues to creep up behind the Old Man obviously playing his cards.

JIMMY [*as Mort lowers the paddle off his shoulder*] Lookout, old man!

Mort spins round, grabs Jimmy by the front of his shirt, pulls him up rudely on his toes.

Jimmy is speechless with surprise, mouth working.

JIMMY [*in a minute, icily*] I beg your pardon!

Mort holds on and Jimmy makes a vigorous effort to get away, fails.

JIMMY [*to the Old Man*] Hey! Give me a hand here!

The Old Man looks round, hesitates, card in the air, then plays it.

ROSEMARY [*running in*] Let him go! What's the matter with you!

Jimmy tries again to get away. Mort shakes him.

ROSEMARY. Let him go! He wasn't bothering you.

Mort shoves her. Rosemary attacks, knocks the paddle out of his hand. She tries to get the stick for a weapon but Mort calmly puts his foot on it. She whips off a shoe, hammers at him with the heel. He strikes it out of her hand and she stands back, helpless, fists against her mouth.

ROSEMARY. Oh!

JIMMY [*to Rosemary*] Get the Cop! This man's crazy!—Get Mr. Shoes! He's right back there.

ROSEMARY [*to the indifferent crowd*] Help! Help him, somebody!—Don't you see he needs help!—Police!—Help! [*Running off*] Mr. Shoes!

JIMMY [*to Mort, changing his attitude, wheedling*] You've got me too tight, old fellow. Ease up a little bit, will you? So we can talk this thing over.

MORT [*tightening*] A little tight?

JIMMY. Yes, God damn it, a little tight! [*panting*] I can't—breathe.—You've got the—wrong—man, you damn—fool!

MORT [*sarcastic*] Think so?

JIMMY. You don't want me.—You want that old—man right over—there—

Mort, gripping him with an iron fist by the shirt front, starts forcing Jimmy to the ground.

JIMMY [*on his knees, yelling*] Every man!

Mort releases him suddenly.

The worst seems to be over. Jimmy leans forward, hands on the ground, trying to get his breath. He doesn't see Mort retrieving the paddle.

JIMMY [*reproving him*] You ought to make—damn sure first—you've got the right—man—before you go—round grabbing—people. [*Hangs his head*] You've torn a hole in my—shirt.

Jimmy moves to get up and Mort kicks his hands out

from under him, plants a shoe on the back of his neck as he falls, pushes his head down. Jimmy, now ignominiously head-down-bottom-up, fights at the foot until Mort whacks his wrist.

JIMMY [*cajoling*] Let me up now. This don't look good—all these people standing here watching me—ass over teakettle. [*Getting angry again*] You've got the wrong—man, I tell you!

MORT. You're Jimmy, ain't you?

JIMMY. I'm Jimmy all right.—No I'm not! That's not my name.

MORT. James, is it?

JIMMY. No, I'm not James either.

MORT. Jim, then.

JIMMY [*quieter*] Yes. I'm Jim.

MORT. Okay, Jim, what's the argument?

JIMMY. The argument is you want Jimmy, not Jim!

MORT. Oh, now, Jim!

JIMMY. And don't be so damn familiar [*Putting on a sudden struggle*] Let me up from here! I've got to get my cap.

MORT. You don't need a cap.

The lights begin to diminish and the Merry-go-Round music comes up, quiet.

JIMMY. Just for a minute. There's something I forgot to say.

MORT. You've said about enough.

JIMMY [*shouting*] No, I've just remembered something. Something big.—Let me up. [*Begging*] Just for a minute—Mort pushes his head down, grips the paddle.

The lights fade into dark and the oval of big stars emerges.

JIMMY. Something about a—

The music comes up into a bang of cymbals that might be partly the impact of the paddle then breaks over into the easy barrel-organ tune.

A light picks out Mr. Shoes, left, front. The music quiets as he comes forward a step or two, thoughtfully, hands behind him, paper under his arm. He looks out over the house seriously, right and left, as if about to add a word of explanation, then he shakes his head with a baffled smile, lifts his hand in a that's-all-for-now gesture and fades out.

The house lights come up and the barrel-organ music plunks on for a minute or two in the tune we heard at the beginning.

The Acrobats was performed at the White Barn Theatre in Westport, Connecticut on August 13, 1961.

THE CHORUS GIRL

A One-Act Play

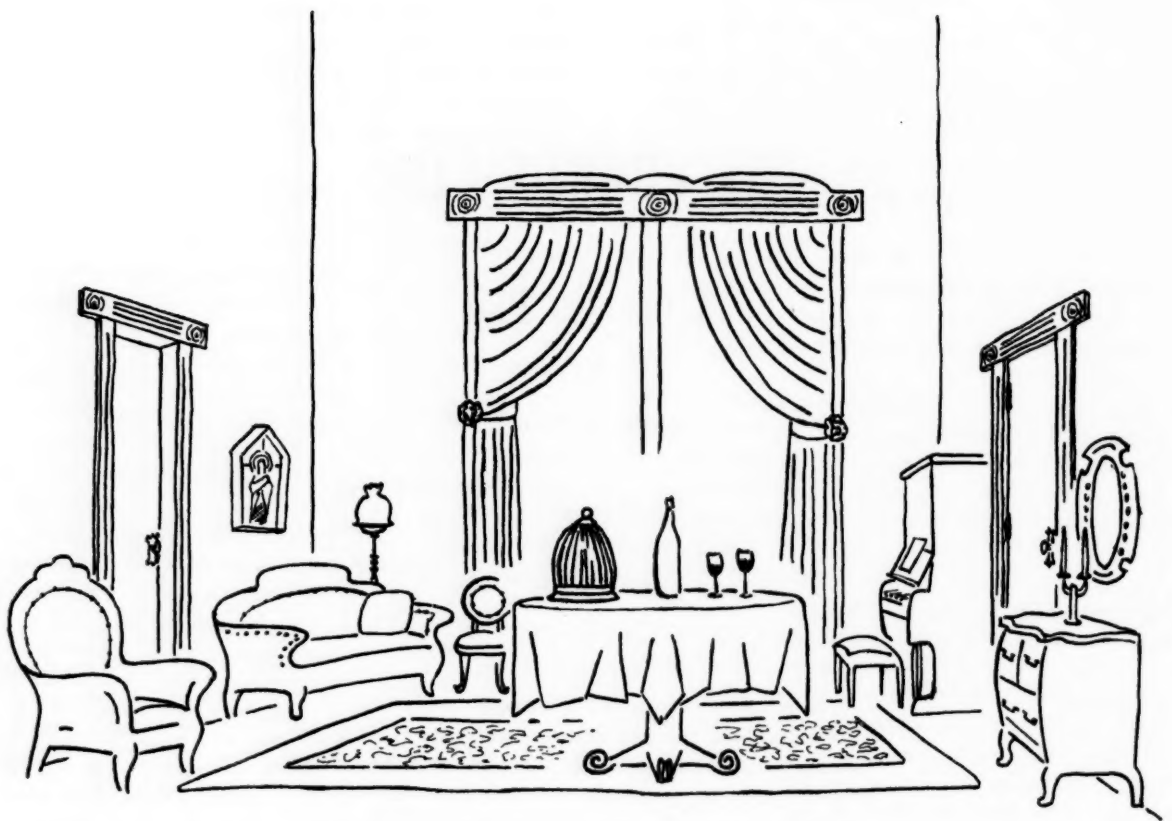
by

John A. Stone

(Based on the short
story of the same title by
Anton Chehov)

The action takes place in Pasha's living room.

Although the furniture lacks elegance and is, indeed, starting to show signs of decay, the room has charm. The parted curtains decorating the two windows upstage center are made of velvet which was once a rich scarlet. The oriental carpet is also worn and faded. At the corner up-stage right an upright piano on which can be seen music albums, a few framed photographs, and an empty gilded canary cage. At the opposite corner, a sofa with cushions and an arm chair near each end. Above the sofa an icon in a case and a lampad in front of it. Downstage right, a chest of drawers on top of which are more photographs, knickknacks, a small framed mirror, a candlestick holding a candle, and Pasha's hat and handbag. The street door is right stage center, between the piano and the chest of drawers; a door at the center of the opposite wall leads to another room. Downstage center, a small round table is covered with a white table cloth, dinnerware, silverware, a bottle of wine, two wine glasses, and a slender vase holding two red roses.



Downstage left an arm chair. Suitable wall paper, chairs, and any other furnishings and ornaments consistent with Pasha's character and the action.

As the curtain rises, the brilliant afternoon sun is streaming through the windows. Nikolay Petrovich and Pasha are seated at the table, having finished a late lunch a short time before. She is an attractive woman, though far from beautiful, of about thirty. Her eyes arouse a certain interest not because they are brilliant in their blackness but because they express from time to time a delicate wistfulness. Her manner is relaxed, her movements are graceful, and her speech is melodious, charming. She gives the impression of being sophisticated and child-like at the same time. She is wearing a bright dress, probably turquoise.

Nikolay, in his middle forties, has black wavy hair, black eyes, a black mustache. Of medium height, he is thickset but agile. He is a handsome man, who smiles frequently, laughs easily—if mostly to mock, and speaks in an agreeable tenor. He is wearing trousers of a light color and a white shirt; but his coat, vest, tie, collar, hat and cane are on the arm chair downstage left, in front of which, in clear view of the audience, are his shoes—for he is now wearing slippers.

NIKOLAY [*the practiced raconteur*] "And that, my dear sir," concluded the young man, "is why I am going—why I must go—to the ends of the earth. I betrayed friendship. I had been the friend of the family, but I became the lover of my best friend's wife. Can such perfidy be forgiven? Never! To the ends of the earth then."

PASHA [*giggling but speaking with real sympathy*] Aah! The poor boy was tormented by his guilty conscience.

NIKOLAY. Wait, wait. Your sympathy may be premature. "To the ends of the earth then!" His traveling companion who, as I said, was an old doctor, had listened to this confession with great interest. He now adjusted his spectacles and inquired serenely, "Are you quite sure that that is the real reason for your journey to the ends of the earth?" Of course, the young man was ready to protest, but the doctor continued: "Have you considered that you may be leaving St. Petersburg because you have perhaps grown tired of the lady and can think of no other way of escaping her passion?" The young man's eyes suddenly blazed with self-recognition, and he exclaimed, "My God, you're right! That's it, that's it!" And at the next stop he got off the train.

PASHA [*bursts into laughter, then imitates Nikolay*] "To the ends of the earth!" Oh, that's a wonderful anecdote, Nikolay, and you told it like an actor.

NIKOLAY. Isn't it delightful? I heard it the other night at the Lebezhiatnikovs. It was told by a cuckold whose audience included his wife and her lover. Of course, he doesn't know of his wife's infidelity or pretends not to, but everybody else did, which made his performance even more enjoyable.

PASHA [*recovering her characteristic gravity*] What a scene! A cuckold telling a story about infidelity. Oh, but how sad! How sad!

NIKOLAY [*laughing*] "To the ends of the earth!" Why sad? I find nothing sad in the situation. A cuckold can be nothing but an object of ridicule.

PASHA. You say that because you're a bachelor.

NIKOLAY. Now, just a moment, Pashenka; let me understand that. Do I strike you as the sort of man whose wife would deceive him?

PASHA. No, I didn't mean that. You just don't look at these things like a married man, that's all.

NIKOLAY. I see, I see. You don't think then that I would have anything to fear if I were married.

PASHA [*laughing*] No! On the contrary. Your wife would probably find you charming; it is you who would deceive her.

NIKOLAY [*also laughing*] That's an insult—but all the same, I am flattered.

PASHA. You see?

NIKOLAY. What's there to see?

PASHA. Cruelty, Nikolay. And sadness too. Men are so cruel . . . [*What follows is said with simplicity and candor, not bitterness.*] I think you are as cruel as the man who told the anecdote.

NIKOLAY [*protesting affectionately*] Pasha!

PASHA. No, let me say what I mean. The world laughs at a cuckold until one day he hears of his disgrace. And then he suffers. . . . I hate suffering. [*In a reverie of agreeable sadness*] Cuckolds . . . broken homes . . . deserted wives . . . and the children; the poor children . . . huddled together against a wall in the street, cold, sick, crying with hunger. Oh, Nikolay, there is so much suffering in this life.

NIKOLAY [*bursting into merry laughter*] Pasha, Pashenka! You are a hopeless sentimentalist; you know that, don't you?

PASHA. I know. But you haven't suffered; that's why you have no pity for that man.

NIKOLAY. There is truth in what you say. I've never been a cuckold. But there is less distinction in suffering than you imagine, Pasha. Everybody does it. We are surrounded with it but it hardly edifies us. I know a man whose wife makes him suffer even though she is a woman of incorruptible virtue. Yet his torment has not disposed him to love his fellow men.

PASHA. Is she a jealous wife?

NIKOLAY. Oh, no. She wastes no emotion whatever. She just doesn't love him.

PASHA. And he is in love with her?

NIKOLAY. Incurably and abjectly. It's really distasteful to see.

PASHA. How interesting. Tell me about him.

NIKOLAY [*smiling at her curiosity*] Some other time; it's a long and tedious tale. [*Changing the subject*] You

know, I was out of sorts a while ago when I left my office, but you have restored my spirits.

PASHA. Oh, Nikolay, have I? Have I really? I am happy. And I want you to be happy when you are with me. Am I a good woman to you, Nikolay?

NIKOLAY. I've never had a better. [*Kisses her.*]

PASHA. Have there been many? You never speak about the women you have lived with.

NIKOLAY. I don't think about them. They don't matter.

PASHA. It hurts me to hear you say that.

NIKOLAY. You puzzle me, Pasha. I should think you would be pleased to hear that the other women don't matter.

PASHA. One of these days you will say the same thing to another woman, and I shall be among those who don't matter.

NIKOLAY [*laughing*]. My poor little Pasha, what sweet and foolish words you speak. You like to peer into the future, and what you see is always dark.

PASHA. Are you really fond of your foolish chorus girl?

NIKOLAY. I am fascinated by her, and I am happy when I am with her. [*Kisses her.*]

PASHA. I want to believe that, Nikolay. Do you know that you are the most confident man I've ever lived with? I am afraid of everything and you don't seem to fear anything. . . . When you're away, I brood; I can't make any sense out of my existence. But when you're with me, my heart is light.

NIKOLAY. My dear little Pasha. [*Kisses her on the brow. He gazes fondly at her and notices a stray fringe of hair covering her forehead. He blows on it gently a number of times, and then she lowers her head shyly.*] What a stubborn wisp of hair. Won't it stay combed back?

PASHA [*with lowered eyes*]. No.

NIKOLAY [*laughing and imitating her*]. No. No? [*removing a small comb from the pocket of his vest which is lying on the nearby arm chair*] Here, let's try. Raise your head.

PASHA [*softly*]. Please, Nikolay, don't.

NIKOLAY. Why not? What's the matter? Why do you look so unhappy?

PASHA. I am embarrassed; it embarrasses me.

NIKOLAY. What, this saucy fringe of hair? But why?

PASHA. I . . . I can't explain it.

NIKOLAY. But you must explain it. I have to know since I have offended your vanity.

PASHA [*impatiently*]. Oh, it isn't vanity at all . . . it's something altogether different . . . it has to do with—my self-respect. I feel that it makes me look indecent.

NIKOLAY. This charming little curl? [*An explosion of merriment*] Oh, Pasha, Pasha!

PASHA [*still with lowered eyes*]. It's true, Nikolay. I can't explain it and to a refined man like you this will seem ridiculous, but—how shall I say—I feel that if this bit of hair would only stay combed back . . . I would

look more . . . respectable. And people would not find it so easy to take advantage of me, and then perhaps everything would be different.

NIKOLAY. I can't understand a word you're saying. You've suddenly become complicated; and complexity is something that I simply cannot endure, especially in a woman, and particularly on such a stifling day. Quickly, let's open another bottle of port.

PASHA. There isn't any left. We just drank the last bottle.

NIKOLAY. Ah! How annoying. [*about to drink what's left in his glass*]

PASHA. Give me a sip, Nikolay; just a tiny sip.

NIKOLAY. Here Pasha, here. Drink it. I've had too much today.

PASHA. All I want is a tiny sip. [*He holds the glass to her lips. She drinks, then moves away from it, smiling*] I simply wanted to share the last of the wine with you; you know how sentimental I am.

NIKOLAY. I know and that is the way I like you. I find your sentimentality infinitely attractive, Pashenka. Don't ever change. [*She holds up her lips to him, which he kisses across the table*] I must bring some wine tomorrow. Some really good port.

PASHA [*simply*]. Isn't this a good port?

NIKOLAY. Not bad. But it isn't the best. It isn't a noble port.

PASHA. Nikolay! . . . And this past month you've been drinking it without a hint that you didn't like it. [*playfully*] Why didn't you bring some of your noble port sooner?

NIKOLAY [*grows somber for a moment, then again cheerful*]. Because, Mignonette, good port is expensive, and until recently my affairs weren't going well. But now things have changed for the better, and tomorrow night I shall bring a few bottles of the best port, and we shall have a little party.

PASHA [*delighted*]. A celebration!

NIKOLAY. A celebration. [*Sips the port*] Whew! What a day! What a day! It's like being in the jungle. [*Mops his face with his napkin*]

PASHA. In a few hours the heat will wane; we might take a walk.

NIKOLAY. That would be nice. A little walk in the cool of evening. [*He raises his glass by the stem and gazes pensively at its contents*] This wine—where did you buy it?

PASHA [*smiling tolerantly*]. This wine . . . this wine is a gift. It was given to me a few months ago by a gentleman.

NIKOLAY. Aha, an adorer!

PASHA. Yes, if you like. An adorer.

NIKOLAY. And what would the adorer say if he knew that you are drinking his wine—his oblation—with another adorer?

PASHA [*without a trace of irony or the sardonic, but with calm simplicity*]. You express yourself so elegantly,

Nikolay. With such refinement . . . [*now answering his question*] He doesn't come here anymore . . . I wonder what sort of woman he is living with these days . . .

NIKOLAY. Oh, I'm sure he has good taste in women, but his taste in wine—that again is another thing. Who is he?

PASHA. A merchant from Moscow. We quarrelled. He beat me—oh, what a beating that was [*She unconsciously pushes back the stubborn fringe of hair*—and then he stopped coming to me.

NIKOLAY. The end of an affair, eh? What did you quarrel about?

PASHA. I don't know. Now isn't that odd? I really can't recall. Perhaps he had simply grown tired of me. I don't know.

NIKOLAY. Perhaps he has a strong sense of theatre and wanted the affair to end dramatically, with harsh words and violence.

PASHA. Perhaps. Let's not speak about it any further.

NIKOLAY. I can't understand you, Pasha. I can't understand why you have relations with such loathsome people. [*smiling and with a trace of cruelty*] Tell me, why do you have relations with such vile people? . . . Why? . . . Hm? . . . I recall your telling me that three years ago you were beaten by an itinerant merchant from Odessa—

PASHA [*interrupting with irritation*] Who took twenty-five rubles out of that drawer before leaving the room . . . Why do I live with such people? Why am I—a chorus girl? You are becoming unkind, Nikolay. What's the matter? Why these questions when you already know the answers? Besides, I don't see only vile people. I have relations with some highly respectable gentlemen. You, Nikolay Petrovitch, deign to visit me, and you certainly are not vile. You are a refined gentleman, a man of affairs. [*The doorbell rings. He stands up and looks inquiringly at Pasha*].

PASHA. Don't be afraid. It's probably the postman or one of the girls.

NIKOLAY. Don't open. [*He gathers his shoes, coat, etc.*] I can't afford to take risks. I am going to the bedroom.

PASHA [*in a low voice*] "To the ends of the earth?"

NIKOLAY [*almost in a stage whisper*] No. To the Garden of Eden. [*Exit in muted laughter. Pasha opens the door and faces the Lady. In her middle thirties, she is a beautiful woman attired with great chic. Her dress is of a dark color as is her stylish hat, setting off her pale face and blond hair to striking contrast. She is out of breath from climbing two steep flights of stairs and from agitation, the cause of which is soon disclosed. For a long moment the two women gaze at one another in silence*].

PASHA [*puzzled and courteous*] Madam? . . . Do you wish to speak with me, madam? . . . Well—what is it you wish? [*The Lady takes a step into the room, surveys it with troubled eyes, then walks to the arm chair from which Nikolay just removed his clothes and sits down as if,*

owing to exhaustion or illness, she can no longer remain standing].

PASHA [*uneasy*] Are you feeling ill? Is there anything—

THE LADY [*silencing her with a sharp movement of her gloved hand*] Is my husband with you?

PASHA [*frightened*] Husband? . . . What husband?

THE LADY. My husband . . . Nikolay Petrovitch Kolpakov.

PASHA. N . . . No, madam . . . I, I don't know any husbands.

THE LADY. So you insist that he is not here?

PASHA. Really, madam, I . . . I don't know what you want of me.

THE LADY. You are loathsome, you are horrid, you are vile. Yes, yes. You are a loathsome woman, and I am glad that I can tell you so at last!

PASHA [*her hand instinctively moving to the fringe of hair*] Please, madam. Please . . . You are mistaken. Please don't speak to me this way. You are a lady; I can see that. I am only a poor girl. I don't know how to answer you. Don't hurt me, please.

THE LADY. Where is my husband? [*pointing to the table with a theatrical gesture*] Ah, wine. It appears that I have interrupted a delightful little repast . . . Well, it's all the same to me whether he is here or not, but I tell you that the embezzlement has been discovered. [*Pasha looks terrified*.] Yes, yes. The money has been missed, and they are looking for my husband. They intend to arrest him. And that's your doing. [*She rises to pace up and down the room in great agitation*.]

PASHA. Please go. I am ill. You have made a terrible mistake. I know nothing of this. Go.

THE LADY. The police are looking for him, don't you understand? This very day they will find and arrest him. [*She lets out a sob filled with resentment*.]

PASHA. Oh, madam. [*Moves toward her as if to embrace her*.]

THE LADY. Don't touch me. *You*. You have put him in this frightening situation. Loathsome, horrid creature! Disgusting, mercenary woman!

PASHA [*tearfully*] Oh, dear God—

THE LADY. How dare you utter God's name! Listen *you*, low woman, I am helpless. You are stronger than I. But there is somebody who can protect me and my children. God sees everything. He is just! He will make you answer for my tears—for every one of them—for all my sleepless nights! There will come a time. You will remember me!

PASHA. As God is my witness, I know nothing, madam. [*bursts into tears*.]

THE LADY. And I say that you are lying! I know all about it. I have known for a long time. I know that for the last month Nikolay Petrovitch has been with you every day.

PASHA [*exasperated*] Yes, that's true. So what? What of it? I have many visitors but I don't force anyone to come here. Anybody can do as he pleases.

THE LADY. Oh, you know how to speak. A ready tongue, cunning, and deceit—it's all part of the *metier*, isn't it. But I tell you that the embezzlement has been discovered. He has stolen money at his office for the sake of such a . . . Because of you he chose to commit a crime.

PASHA. What do you want of me?!

THE LADY. Listen. You can have no principles for you live only to bring evil—that's your aim; but one cannot believe that you have fallen so low you have lost all trace of human feeling. He has a wife, children.

PASHA. Will you finally tell me what you want me to do?

THE LADY. If he is deported, I and the children will starve. Understand that. We will starve. And yet there is a way of saving us from catastrophe. If I deposit 900 rubles today, he will be left in peace. Only 900 rubles!

PASHA [*dazed*] What 900 rubles? I . . . I don't know . . . I haven't taken . . . I don't have—

THE LADY. Let's not waste time. I am not asking you for 900 rubles. You don't have the money. I know that. Besides I am not asking you for what is yours but for something else. It is common knowledge that men give jewels, costly things, to women like you. All I ask is that you return to me those things that my husband has given you.

PASHA. Madam, you understand nothing of these relationships. I am not a mistress to grand dukes. I am only a singer—an ordinary chorus girl. The gentleman never gave me anything. [*suddenly remembering*] Yes, he did. I am so upset that I had nearly forgotten. He gave me a couple of little things. [*She goes to the canary cage and removes the objects from a secret compartment*] Here they are. A bracelet—hollow gold—and this ring with a tiny ruby in it. That's all he has given me. Take it.

THE LADY. You don't really expect me to believe that that's all there is.

PASHA. Madam, the gentleman never gave me any other presents.

THE LADY. Where then is the money? He has squandered mine, the children's, other people's. Where has all that money gone? Listen, I beg you! I was indignant just now and said many harsh things to you. I apologize. Oh, how you must hate me! But if you are capable of compassion, try to see my predicament. I implore you, give me back the things.

PASHA. Hm. You are an odd person, madam. If there were anything else, I would give it to you with great pleasure, but, may God punish me, the gentleman didn't give me anything else. Take it.

THE LADY. What are you giving me? I am not asking for alms but for what you have squeezed out of my husband, that weak, unhappy wretch.

PASHA. I swear, madam, that except for this bracelet and little ring, I never saw anything from your Nikolay Petrovitch. The gentleman only brings me French pastry.

THE LADY. French pastry!! [*laughing with theatrical bitterness and a touch of hysteria*] That is really most amusing! At home the children have nothing to eat, the drawing room is daily crawling with creditors, and here they gorge on French pastry! What delicious comedy! [*suddenly changing her tone to one of glacial hostility*] Don't take me for a fool. I saw you with my husband at that harbor cafe last Thursday. Can you deny that you were wearing expensive brooches and bracelets? You see? There's no use playing the innocent lamb with me.

PASHA. And you are certain that it was the gentleman who gave me those jewels. You are positive.

THE LADY. I am asking for the last time: are you going to give me the things or not? [*Pasha stares at her with mute anger and pain. The Lady soliloquizes now like an actress in the full awareness of her audience*]. What's to be done now? If I cannot get 900 rubles, he is lost—and I and the children too. Shall I strangle this miserable woman or perhaps go down on my knees before her? [*She presses her handkerchief to her mouth and begins to sob.*] I beg you! It is you, after all, who have destroyed my husband. Save him. You have no pity for him, but the children . . . the children . . . What are they guilty of?

PASHA. How can the poor little children be guilty?

THE LADY. Then why can't you show some human decency? Do you want to see them on the street?

PASHA [*tearfully*] Oh, madam, how can you accuse me of that? I—want them to end up on the street, the poor lambs, cold, hungry, crying? [*She lets out a sob.*]

THE LADY. Oh, stop this comedy. You're not fooling me with your crocodile tears.

PASHA. I was only trying to say that I feel great pity for the little ones.

THE LADY. Well, all right. You've said it. Now that doesn't mean that we have to become friends.

PASHA. Believe me, madam, I am speaking the truth. You say that I am a mean woman and that I have ruined Nikolay Petrovitch, but I assure you before God Almighty that I have had no gain from seeing him.

THE LADY. Oh, I know. I know. Women like you never act from self-interest. They are altogether inspired by the ideal of love. You have a horror of rich admirers and give your heart only to the destitute.

PASHA. In our troupe—I work at Balaklitzy's Arcadia—Luba alone is kept by a rich man. The rest of us live from hand to mouth. Nikolay Petrovitch is an educated and considerate man, so I have received him. Mr. Balaklitzy insists that we have no right not to receive gentlemen.

THE LADY. I am not interested in the sordid particulars of your profession! [*on the verge of hysteria*] I am asking for the things! Give me back the things. I am weeping . . . I am humiliating myself . . . [*then struck*]

by a fresh idea] If you want me to, I will go down on my knees. Is that what you want? [*Raises her skirt a trifle and is about to kneel.*]

PASHA [*prevents her by taking hold of her arms*] What are you trying to do, you cruel woman! Did you come here just to . . . to . . . to be magnificent and humiliate me?!

THE LADY [*Freeing herself from Pasha's grasp, she goes down on her knees and declaims with theatrical anguish—which the actress playing the role must not render operatic*] There! I am on my knees! On my knees I cry to you for mercy! On my knees I implore you to give me the things!

PASHA [*panic stricken, shrieks*] Nikolay Petrovitch! Nikolay Petrovitch! Help me! I can't bear it any longer! Come out, take her away!

THE LADY [*clasping her knees*] The things. For my children, I beg you. The things. I implore you.

PASHA [*Sobbing hysterically and freeing herself from the Lady's hold, she rushes to the bed room door, throws it open, and drags out Nikolay Petrovitch, who is still holding his shoes, cane and gloves with one hand, while he hugs his vest and coat under his arm and is holding his collar and tie in the other hand—a portrait of absurdity.*] Come out, you disgusting coward and take this frightening woman away. Can't you see how she is torturing me, can't you see?!

THE LADY [*to Nikolay*] Swine! Are you pleased with what you have done, are you pleased? Do you see what state you've reduced me to? I am on my knees before your cocotte. It is for your children that your wife is abasing herself.

NIKOLAY [*in terror*] For God's sake, Yelena, what are you doing? Get up. Come. Come. Get up. Yelena, please get up.

THE LADY. Not until you make her give me the things.

NIKOLAY [*turning helplessly to Pasha*] Pasha.

PASHA. Pasha, Pasha! You want your wicked chorus girl to give you the things, eh?

NIKOLAY. Yelena.

THE LADY. Don't address yourself to me. I am not the one that's got the things.

NIKOLAY. Get up from the floor so that we can at least talk . . . so that we can talk and . . . and see what's to be done.

PASHA. Talk about the things, eh? The three of us. Talk about the marvellous jewels that you bought me with stolen money. You want me to return them. I'll give them back to you. [*She rushes to the piano and returns with the bird cage, extracts a small box from a secret compartment, and begins to remove the things placing them on the table, having meanwhile put the cage on her chair.*] Here. Here. Here.

NIKOLAY. Pasha, what are you doing? Put those

things back into the cage. I didn't say [*turning to his wife*] Yelena, let me take you home. Come.

THE LADY. Don't touch me. I will not budge till she gives me what I came for.

PASHA. Here are *the things*, here! A coral necklace. Brooches. This bracelet—lovely, a gift from the doctor from Kiev. Rings. Take them. Only I didn't get them from this man. Did I, you gallant lover?

NIKOLAY. Pasha, calm yourself. Put those things back into the canary cage. Yelena, Yelena, let's go. I will explain at home.

THE LADY. She isn't going to put anything back into the canary cage. [*She extends her hand to Pasha peremptorily.*]

PASHA. Keep my things. But they are not from Nikolay Petrovitch. I received them from other guests.

THE LADY [*rising wearily, she goes to the table, looks at the jewels with an appraising eye, and as she puts them into her handbag, she says*] This isn't all. There won't be 500 rubles worth here. [*to Nikolay*] Stop trying to look pathetic and help your cancan dancer find the rest of the things. Go on!

NIKOLAY. Yelena. Please. It is impossible for me to speak to you in her presence. Let's go home. I can explain everything.

PASHA. No, you're not going yet. The lady must be obeyed. You will help me find the rest of the hoard. Come! Come here! [*She takes him by the hand, leads him to the chair, picks up the cage and places it in his hands; then she opens the secret compartment—perhaps this consists of a small drawer under the floor of the cage.*]

NIKOLAY. Pasha. Yelena. For God's sake calm yourselves and let's put an end to this scene. You don't know how I am suffering, Hélène.

PASHA. Stop speaking nonsense. Men like you don't suffer; they just overeat. [*She speaks this line without malice; she just throws it away.*]

NIKOLAY. Ah! Don't become insolent, you vile hussy!

PASHA. Be quiet and be sensible. You're in my house and your wife wants me to give her my things. Here's what's left. A gold watch. Now when did you give it to me? On my name day? It's so hard to remember with a generous guest like you.

NIKOLAY [*sick*] Put it back, put it back. I didn't give it to her, Yelénichka, believe me.

THE LADY. Bring it here! [*He obeys.*]

PASHA. And now take what's left. [*She flings the objects before his feet*] A cigarette case, studs, earrings, a locket.

THE LADY [*to Nikolay*] Pick them up.

PASHA. That's right, be a gentleman. Pick them up. [*He obeys, while the Lady scrutinizes each object with an appraising eye. Pasha now turns the cage upside down, so that a trickle of beads falls to the floor.*] Just a few beads,

madam. That's all there is. You will only be wasting your breath if you ask for more. Take it and get rich! The canary cage is empty. *[She places the cage on the table.]* But if you'd like to search, you may. After all, you've made yourself at home, haven't you?

NIKOLAY *[as the Lady stuffs the things into her handbag]* Shut up! I won't put up with your insolent language of the taverns here. You're in the presence of a lady, you miserable wench. Do you understand me? A lady. *[Pasha looks at him dumbfounded.]* Hélène we shall leave together.

THE LADY. Oh, if only you knew how revolting I find you at this moment.

NIKOLAY *[Puts his hand before his eyes for a moment as if he were both dizzy and attempting to conceal his tears. Then he goes down on his knees.]* Yelena, I can't express the anguish in my heart. I can't tell you what shame I feel. I beg you to let me go home with you.

THE LADY. In the first place you are hardly dressed for the street. And then you are obviously at home. You are where you belong: with your mistress . . . Oh, get up. Contrition rests uneasy on your brow. Get up. *[He rises.]* It is really extraordinary how much you seem at home here . . . in your slippers . . . your shirt unbuttoned . . . your hair tousled, I suppose. It has been years since you looked so much at home in your own home. For a woman like me, mademoiselle—a wife, a mother—meeting someone of your kind must always remain an unforgettable experience. *[To Nikolay]* I must not interrupt your tête-à-tête any longer. I am leaving as I came—in my solitude. *[with a proud and elegant gesture in the direction of the table]* There must be some wine left in that bottle. Finish the wine. You have cause to celebrate now. I am going to save you. *[Exit. Nikolay sits down and begins to put on his shoes.]*

PASHA *[after watching him for a moment]* What are you going to do now? Go to the ends of the earth?

NIKOLAY *[in a low voice but full of bitterness]* She said you were loathsome and, oh, how right she was. How right!

PASHA. You were listening attentively behind the door, weren't you?

NIKOLAY. I shall never forgive myself for what I've done to her, never.

PASHA. Now that she has saved herself and her children, I don't think she cares whether you do or not.

NIKOLAY. You don't know how vulgar you are. How can you stand there so calm after the way you humiliated her?

PASHA. After the way I humiliated her, eh? . . . Why? Why do I always get involved with men like you? That merchant from Moscow. One day, for no reason at all, he beat me and left. You remind me of him, Nikolay.

NIKOLAY. Women like you should be beaten, flogged.

PASHA. You know, I think the trouble with me is that

I don't understand people. I just don't know anything about people. That's why I suffer. Even now I think that you are the most refined gentleman I have ever met. And yet you are no better than the merchant from Moscow. But why couldn't I see that sooner? I guess I'm just a fool.

NIKOLAY. No question about that. But you might have the decency to spare me your banalities at a time like this . . . You can never know the humiliation that she suffered today, but I shall have it on my conscience for the rest of my life.

PASHA. I must be going mad. I am. This is my apartment. But I don't know what is happening. You speak as if you actually believed that you had stolen that money for my sake.

NIKOLAY. Where is my collar? Ah, here.

PASHA. What things did you bring me? Will you please answer me?

NIKOLAY. Ahhh, this cursed collar! Help me fasten it.

PASHA *[helping]* When did you bring me presents?

NIKOLAY. Presents? Presents? That's of no importance. Stop talking about yourself. You are of no consequence. Tonight you will be at the Arcadia dancing the cancan and singing risqué songs. That's your life. But she—good God—she comes from a world in which there are ideals, beauty, order . . . And she cried before you. She came here and humbled herself.

PASHA. I am asking you, what gifts did you bring me?

NIKOLAY *[Picks up his tie.]* Oh, God! She who is so respectable, so proud, so pure—she went down on her knees before this Camille of mine. And I brought her to this! I let it come to that!

PASHA. How could you simply stand there and let her insult me? Why didn't you say you never gave me any of those things?

NIKOLAY. Where is my tie pin? Did you see it anywhere?

PASHA. You probably stuck it into the back of your lapel.

NIKOLAY *[Finds it.]* Ah, yes.

PASHA. Wait. Your tie is askew.

NIKOLAY *[trying to straighten it]* How is it now?

PASHA. Here, let me straighten it. Nikolay, why at least didn't you tell me that you were married?

NIKOLAY. Get away from me. Don't touch me. *[Removing his comb from his vest pocket, he alternately combs himself and gesticulates with it.]* I will now return home and go down on my knees before her and beg that great lady to forgive me. And I shan't move until she pardons me and raises me from my wretchedness. *[He puts on and buttons his vest.]*

PASHA *[moved]* You speak as if she were a saint.

NIKOLAY. She is a saint and my sin against her is unpardonable.

PASHA. I am an ignorant woman and today especially I feel as if I don't understand anything. But I know that you are in love with her . . . You love your wife very much, don't you?

NIKOLAY [*his eyes filled with tears*] What can you know of love? What can you know of torment?

PASHA [*gently and compassionately*] Poor Nikolay, why do you deny me the only kind of knowledge I have? I know that you are suffering because she doesn't love you. Even an ignorant chorus girl can understand that.

NIKOLAY [*putting on his coat*] This has been your day. You stand there glorying in your triumph because Yelena went down on her knees before you.

PASHA. You stole for her sake. Confess it.

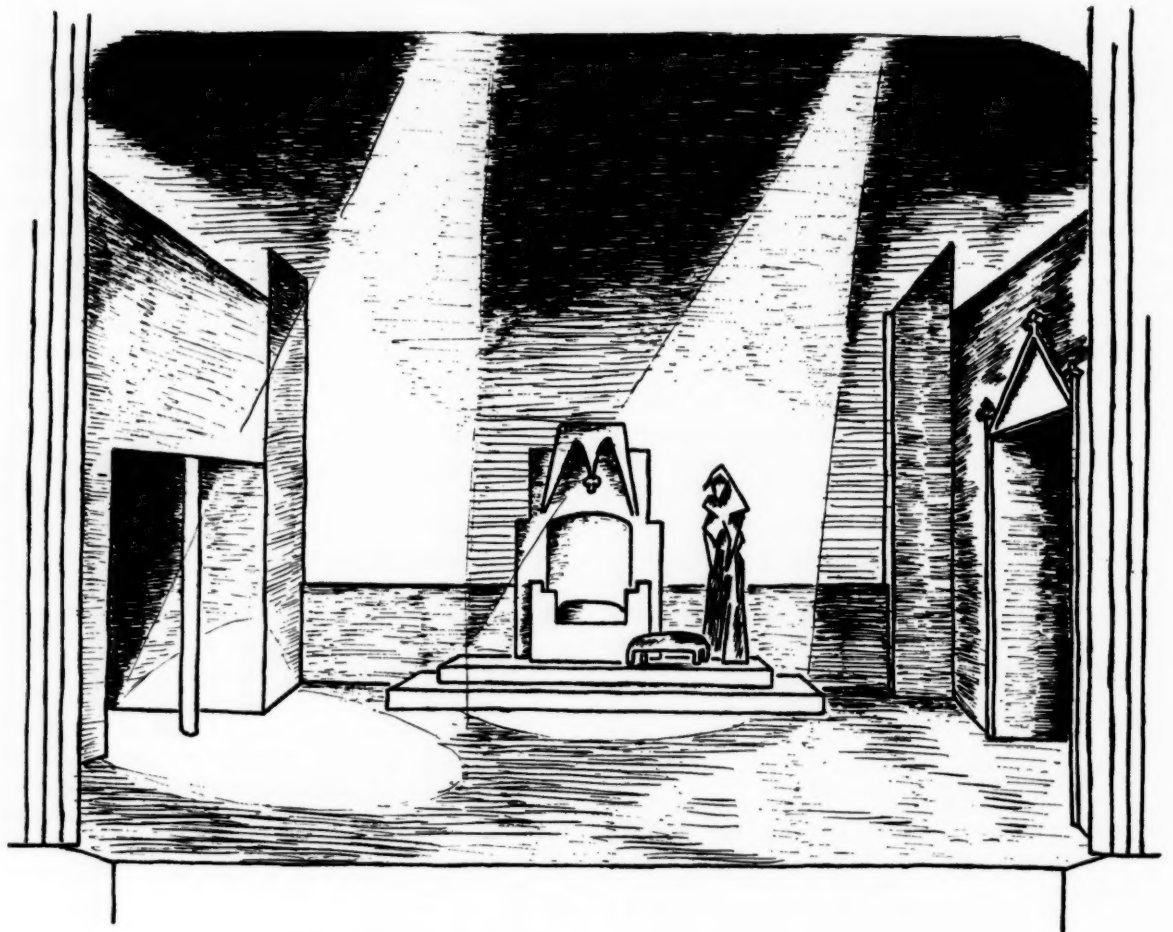
NIKOLAY [*picking up his hat, cane, and gloves*] One does not confess in the harlot's house, mademoiselle. One comes and goes. [*exit.*]

PASHA [*Stunned for a moment, she screams after him.*]

Go to the ends of the earth, you devil!! Go to hell!!

[*She sits at the table and begins to wail.*] They have robbed me . . . Why did I give them my earrings, why? [*Her sobbing gradually subsides while she is resting her head on her arm. Finally she is silent. The stage grows dim to indicate the lapse of time, and the light scheme changes now to suggest early evening. Pasha raises her head from her arm and for a while sits immobile staring at the canary cage. Then she goes to the chest of drawers, lights the candle, removes a powder puff from her handbag and powders her face in front of the mirror. She replaces the powder puff, takes a comb out of the bag, and tries to comb back the unruly fringe of hair.*]

PASHA. It's no use. [*She puts on her hat and tries once more with the comb.*] No use. [*Replaces the comb into the handbag and blows out the candle.*] I'm just a sentimental fool. [*Exit. As the light dims and goes out, a bright beam encircles the cage, the bottle, and the almost empty wine glass for a moment. Then blackout and curtain.*]



WITCHES' SABBATH

by

Harry Granick

National Theatre Conference Award, 1949
Sergel, University of Chicago prize, 1949
National Five Arts Contest, first prize, 1952
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE NEEDLER
FATHER D'AUSSIGNY'S ATTENDANT
FATHER D'AUSSIGNY, the Inquisitor
BARON REMY DE PUY REGUIER
SIR HUGH, his neighbor and friend
GUY DE GROS, his Provost
LADY HELAINE, his wife
THE JONGLEUR
MARTIN, the Needler's assistant
MAYOR CAPHARDS, the Baron's vassal
COLAS, a serf
ANDREE, Colas' bride
FATHER CRION
SOLDIERS:
 Jehan
 Claude
 Robin

GILES, a page-boy
THE WITCH
THE SHEPHERD
PALEY'S WOMAN
A WOMAN
A YOUNG MAN
CAST OF THE PANTOMINE:

Priest (Pierre)
Serf
Lord
Another Serf
His wife

MADAME BOLIN
SIMON
MILLICENT
PHILLIPE
RICHARD
SOLDIERS AND PEASANTS

TIME:

The last half of the fourteenth century

PLACE:

Northern France. Father D'Aussigny's Abbey and the Baron's fief.

THE SET:

This is a play of changing scene. It must, therefore, be contained in a unit set, both to insure economy and the utmost fluidity of action.

A COMMENT:

The play is not about an historical event. It dramatizes an experience of mankind, and is, in this sense, contemporaneous.

ACT I

Scene 1

SCENE: Late Fourteenth Century. Northern France. In Father D'Aussigny's Abbey. On a small dais, a canopied chair and a footstool.

An unusually lean figure in mendicant friar's garb, head severely cowed, is sitting on the footstool, apprehensively watching the right entrance. He is *The NEEDLER*, but we shall not know this until later.

F. D'Aussigny's ATTENDANT enters unexpectedly from the left. The NEEDLER half jumps, then settles down, a furtive, menacing presence.

ATTENDANT. [a vindictive little man in Dominican habit] How did you manage to get in here? You had better leave before Fathey D'Aussigny finds you here. . . .

He does not wish to listen to your hypocritical remorse. An agent who tried to cheat the Holy Inquisition. Count yourself fortunate you're still about—nor tempt him. Out with you! [*The Needler doesn't look at him, doesn't move.*] You don't frighten me for all your reputation. Go at once! Go, I say!

F. D'Aussigny enters, right. He is a large, stout man with a pink, somnolent face. His manner is divorced and interior and suavely ironic. He stops, displeased. The Needler drops to his knees, head bowed low. The Attendant pantomimes his blamelessness and indignation.

F. D'A. You wish to explain yourself? But what can you say? You and your companion thought to profit by your act; you failed. Win or lose, you are the same: untrustworthy and vile. Go. [*The Needler rises and slowly starts out, left, when the Inquisitor remembers something.*] Wait. [*The Needler turns hopefully.*]

ATTENDANT. But, Father, Sirs Hugh and Remy are in the ante-room. And Sir Remy is most impatient. He has been four years from home—a man wild to see his wife—and you will pardon me.

F. D'A. He doesn't know his Provost is here?

ATTENDANT. He doesn't know anyone from his barony is here. Nor does the Provost know why we summoned him—except possibly to test that bottomless belly of his.

F. D'A. Good. Have him outside the door ready to my call. Show the Barons in.

The Attendant pettily indicates The Needler, but the Inquisitor gestures him on his way, and he exits, left. To The Needler, pointing him right. Meditate in that far corner . . . and listen well.

NEEDLER [*overjoyed*] My Lord Bishop.

F. D'A. [*motions silence*] Quickly.

The Needler glides rapidly to the corner and, back to the room, stands as if in pious meditation. The Attendant reenters to announce:

ATTENDANT. Father D'Aussigny, Sir Hugh, Sir Remy.

Sir Hugh is a bluff old man in hunting costume. Baron Remy, clothes travel-worn and dusty, is a strikingly handsome, vigorous man of 35. He wears a golden earring, which he sometimes likes to stroke.

F. D'A. Welcome, gentlemen.

He extends the back of his hand.

SIR HUGH [*kissing the hand, while F. D'A makes the sign of the cross over him*] My Lord Bishop. Well, here he is! Met him on the road while hunting. Three years a prisoner of the English—and not one whit the worse for it. Cannot wait to get to his Lady. Would not come home with me even to change to decent clothes. I had a time persuading him to poke in here.

BARON [*Only now does he approach to kiss F. D'As hand and accept his blessing. His manner is sardonic and openly antagonistic.*] My liege Lord. You are my liege Lord, are you not? . . . As I am your vassal?

F. D'A. Why do you ask this?

BARON. Because, if you are my liege Lord and protector, how strange that you should have left me to rot three years a war prisoner of the English for want of ransom. I am here, yes—all rags and dust of the road, but only because they finally released me in contempt—like a peasant, retaining my armour, retaining my beloved horse, Grisart, letting me go on foot—so bound homeward.

F. D'A. Why didn't your fief furnish the ransom?

BARON. I'll not let them off that hook. But if they were too poor, that isn't true of you, my Lord Bishop.

F. D'A. On the contrary, the lender must be poor when the borrower is poor. I haven't seen a frank of duties out of your fief since you rode off to the war four years ago. And what of the money I advanced to equip your troop? How shall I recover that?

BARON. I see. Money. Money is nobler than fealty. [*to Sir Hugh*] How the world has been stood on its head. Fear not for your money, my Lord. I shall repay it, every sou. But as for our oaths of fealty to one another, you have breached yours: I am no longer your vassal. Farewell. I am glad to have had this talk with you. I continue my journey homeward more eagerly, for there, at least all things are as I left them—and I am still king to my men and to my Lady, money or no.

F. D'A. [*letting him go a little way*] How are you certain that things are as you left them with your fief—your men-at-arms, or with your Lady—if the world is on its head? [*The implication turns the Baron about. To Sir Hugh*] Are things the same with you since your return?

SIR HUGH [*sighing gustily*] They are not. Nor are they the same anywhere in France since that accursed gunpowder blew our chivalry into the dirt. Everywhere our serfs have been secretly laughing at us. There have been uprisings. 100,000 peasants forming an army together! Who ever heard the like since the world began? Fighting for two years. Castles burnt down. Nobles murdered. An attempt made even upon me. Many a night, I see the fire on the heath where heretics and rebels convene their foul conspiracies. No sir, your fief, no more than mine, is the same. Nor will you find it easier for returning so—so plainly humbled.

F. D'A. Such is my considered opinion as a judge of the Holy Inquisition which best knows the temper of the people.

BARON. You spoke of my Lady. How is she not the same? [*Silently, F. D'A mounts to his chair. The Attendant places a footstool for him, then at a sign, goes out.*] Sir Hugh.

SIR HUGH [*too hastily*] I haven't seen her. Told you so twice before. Haven't been near your fief.

BARON. But she is not the same? Come, what is there to this? I am met on the road rather too fortuitously. I am persuaded, nay, bludgeoned into coming here—to be fed on innuendo? How not the same, my friends? How not the same? [*The Attendant returns with the Baron's Pro-*

vost, Guy De Gros, a hugh big-bellied man with a scar on his coarse face] Guy de Gros!

GUY [*astounded and glad*] Sir Remy, my Lord! Is it you? How noble that you are returned! Now everything will be different.

BARON. How different? Are matters so bad?

GUY [*unwilling to talk before strangers*] Why, not bad at all. Not at all! They are good—that is, good enough.

BARON. Then where was the ransom? [*Guy is disconcerted.*] And how did you leave Lady Helaine?

GUY. Good, good, my Lord. Blooming like a poppy. [*Now aware of the sceptical atmosphere*] She doesn't expect you. No one does.

BARON [*seizing him by the doublet*] Who is he? . . . Say!

GUY. Arnaut.

BARON. What Arnaut?

GUY. Your page.

BARON. Arnaut? Who was too young to take with me for my squire? [*Violently releasing him. To F. D'A*] To what purpose have you staged this humiliation, my Lord? Could I not have been trusted to discover it for myself?

F. D'A. It would not have been good for you, my son. You see, I am perhaps more your friend than you supposed.

BARON. Then prove it. I cannot now reenter like this: I am too fallen. I must come in the semblance of strength: a new suit of chainmail, a new war horse, and armour for him, or I shall not easily reestablish myself in pride and power. And you lend me the money, I will repay it and all my debt to you within a year. Less! I give you my oath on it.

F. D'A. You could not keep it.

BARON. You will not help me? Then speak not of friendship, my Lord.

F. D'A. But I will help you—and in a better way. If your fief is like most today, it is a hotbed of heresies and dissensions. You will not get much out of it in its present temper. Is that not so, Master Provost?

GUY. It is the merchant, Mayor Caphards, my Lord, whom you left to guard your estate. But instead, he guards the estate of the serfs, first.

BARON. Caphards! That false steward who failed my ransom?

GUY. Because of him, we have had to forage and raid for our table amid hatred and resistance on every side. Of all the men-at-arms who went into battle with you, five only have stayed on to claim their pay.

BARON. Five? Five only?

SIR HUGH. It is no better anywhere in France.

BARON. It is this Caphards? But even so, let me but come well armed and mounted and I shall soon demonstrate who is the master inside and outside my castle.

F. D'A. [*to Sir Hugh*] You returned armed and mounted three years ago. How is it with you?

SIR HUGH. I am as poor as when I came. Nor does the fire on the heath cease to make me feel poorer.

BARON. Nonetheless, I shall master them. I have a sterner goad—one I did not suspect. Never fear but I shall master them!

F. D'A. You will master them, but only when their disobedience to God and to the authority divinely vested in you as a nobleman has been stamped out—by the Inquisition.

BARON. The Inquisition, did you say?

F. D'A. Only so will you be enabled to repay your debts, to retrieve your war horse and armour, to restore your fief and your affairs to their ancient normalities.

BARON. The Inquisition. . . . At what price? Forfeiture to Church and King of the properties of the condemned, which are, in fact, my properties?

F. D'A. You will get more out of the properties left to you, and sooner, than out of the whole as it is now.

BARON. Nevertheless, and you please, my Lord Bishop, I will suffer the whole. The Inquisition is not welcome. I do not know that there are heretics on my land. Nor do you: for whom do you accuse, my Lord? As for rebels, I cannot but believe that my fief will be as glad to have me back as I to be back with them, for all that I am so "plainly humbled." I was once good for them; I will be good for them again and we shall once more prosper together. I thank you for your generous offer. [*Confidentially to Guy*] Go home at once. Say nothing of my being in France—nor of anything concerning me or what took place here. I shall remain behind a little time.

GUY. What of Arnaut?

BARON. Have him—out of the way before I come.

GUY [*slyly*]. Come soon, my Lord. Mayor Caphards' nephew marries a very pretty serf in ten days. Really something—nice.

BARON. . . . Remember, not a word of me. Go now. [*Guy departs.*] Will you have me for a while, Sir Hugh?

SIR HUGH. Heigho! To feast, to talk old times, to hunt together again? I had not hoped for such good fortune!

BARON. Good fortune, my friend? Come along then. I am woefully tired. My Lord Bishop, perhaps I should thank you, if not for the manner of it, for the act of preparing me.

F. D'A. If you should reconsider my offer—

BARON [*to Sir Hugh*]. Would you stop to reconsider such an offer?

SIR HUGH. To take from me what is mine?

BARON. Adieu, my Lord Bishop.

He bows and goes. Sir Hugh follows.

F. D'A. [*Gestures the Attendant out, then beckons the Needler to approach.*] Do you know his barony? . . . You have displeased me greatly. Go.

The Needler kisses his outstretched hand and goes. Wiping his hand, F. D'A stares after him.

Lights dim to blackout.

ACT I

Scene 2

SCENE: *Two days later, beside a roadside cross, worn and weather-beaten.*

Lady Helaine leans against the right side of the vertical limb, her head thrown back against it, her eyes shut in long prayer or contemplation. She is about 30, a proud, wonderfully made woman with great sensual sensitivity. Her chestnut hair is in long braids modestly crowned with a chaplet of flowers.

Hearing a far off neigh, she looks toward it and follows what she sees with increasing attention, and, as the rider comes nearer, with such agitation that she has to curb a compulsion to retreat. We hear the Baron whoa his animal and its neigh as he leaves it. Helaine moves to the other side of the cross, fighting for composure.

The Baron enters, as if in a painful dream and passes her a few steps before turning about to observe her. She stares at him as if for the first time realizing the enormity of her behaviour, especially in regard to its effect on him, then goes slowly to him. They stand so a moment, then she falls on her knees and grasping his body to her, cries out.

HELAINE. Remy, my Lord, my husband. . . . What have I done?

BARON [*disengaging her hands*]. Softly, softly, my dear. I have not eaten a long time and must not take you all at once. Let me look at you feature by feature. . . . Aye, so I remember you in that world of long ago. The wondrous faery hair, the throat for my mouth, the eyes in which I saw my heaven. I would swear you are Helaine.

HELAINE. Would that I had died when you rode away. [*Holding it with both hands, she points a poniard to her chest.*] I waited only to tell you my heart before I drove this judgment in.

BARON [*seizing her hands*]. No, you shall not cheat me in this. This is for me to do.

HELAINE. Your hand on me again. Even for this, but touching me. [*She rests her cheek on his hand and he pulls it away. She offers him the poniard.*] Take it, for God will not forgive death by my own hand. I'll have His mercy as a gift from you, undeserving as I am. Remember this afterward, however it may seem to you today: you are the only one I ever loved and do love now.

BARON [*snatching the poniard*]. How can you say this?

HELAINE. Strike, Remy! For pity's sake, strike!

BARON. Why, why? I cannot find it in me, search as I will. Was I not a good husband to you and a good lover? How did I offend you that I could be so forgotten? Or earned this public shame so that I could crawl into a hole out of the public eye? I should ram this to your heart! Why cannot my hand do it? Do it! [*He throws away the*

weapon.] Nay, I have time for this. I must know more before I act toward you and toward those others who let me rot in England. But act I will, as you shall see. And I will have again the full condition of the world you filched from me.

HELAINÉ [*holding him by his garment*] My Lord, what use is my life to me having lost you?

BARON. The choice was yours, Helaine. I would not have had it so. [*loosening her hand*] I have come thus far to my castle unaided. I'll proceed alone. [*He goes.*]

HELAINÉ [*still on her knees, turns and watches him as he mounts and gallops off*] How shall I live?

Blackout.

ACT I

Scene 3

SCENE: Dusk of a falling day, five days later.

At right, the gloomy open doorway of a church. Left of center, is a storm-riven tree, a bench circling the trunk. The sky is lowering and ominous.

A cheerless, single-file procession of three enters from left on the way to the church. Leading is Mayor Caphards, vassal and merchant, about 50, a stocky dignified man of good nourishment and good clothes. Following him is his nephew Colas, a shambling peasant-serf of about 19. Behind Colas comes his bride-to-be Andree, not over 17, a modest, beautiful child-woman, presently anxiously sensitive to Colas' downness of mood. They wear clean, patched clothing. Halfway to the church, Colas stops and glares uncertainly at Andree. She responds by touchingly putting out a timid hand toward him which he disregards.

CAPHARDS [*from the portico*] Are you coming? What a peasant you are, nephew. It's your wedding day. Lift up your head!

COLAS [*eyes on Andree*] On this day of all days, I have no reason to lift my head.

CAPHARDS [*not insensitively, but trying to ease the situation*] Look how she pleads with you. What does it amount to? Your own sister, my wife, gave the first night to the Baron's father. But afterwards—we had eleven years of nights—and children—and happiness. All gone with the plague. . . . [*crosses himself with an old sadness*] gone with God. I would gladly give the Baron a second fling at her if only she were alive today! What is a night? A stone hurled at the moon: the stone falls, but the moon is forever. Pah! It's all about nothing!

COLAS [*to Andree*] Is it nothing? [*He seizes her brutally by the shoulders.*] What passes in that pretty head? [*Her eyes tell him her guilt, her fear, her love. He draws her to him with a fierce protectiveness.*] I curse this day! I curse the Baron in his castle, in his canopied bed, his Lady, his wine, his sword and sergeants!

F. Crion appears in the doorway. He is a small erect old man, ascetically thin and pale of face under his gleaming white hair. Sensitive and humane, a trace of guilt underlies his timorous, philosophical surrender to the harsh demands of the period.

F. CRION. Welcome, my children. [*They approach.*] No friends, Andree? No one you wanted? [*She bends her knee and kisses his outstretched hand. He makes the sign of the cross over her, but speaks to Colas.*] You've quarreled. A sin on such a day. A wedding is for rejoicing, Colas.

COLAS. I rejoice, then, Father—for the Baron. [*He takes Andree's hand and they pass into the church. Discomfited, F. Crion follows.*]

The Needler and a Companion, also dressed as a mendicant friar, enter right. They are weary and dusty. Martin is the younger, and, as his uncowed head reveals, is coarse and brutish in feature and manner. He is apprehensively deferential to his furtively cowed superior. When the two converse, they often lean heads together conspiratorially.

The Needler drops on the bench, back to the church. He shakes his flask: it is empty. Martin already has flask to lips when The Needler's hand reaches demandingly for it. Reluctantly, Martin surrenders it, receiving it back without a drop in it. His only comment is to turn its mouth on his palm and sardonically lick off the moisture.

MARTIN. Bless wine. [*then responding to the The Needler's look*] My belly grumbles.

NEEDLER. Tell your belly there will be wine and meat at the castle. See how it sits on the land: like a tombstone on a grave.

MARTIN. And how innocent the heath is by day. [*mockingly crossing himself*] Bless night on the heath.

NEEDLER. Aye, bless night and rebellion, bless fear. For where there's fear, Martin, there's money.

MARTIN. Lord grant it so! You think Father D'Ausigny will surely have us back again?

NEEDLER. He will forgive us everything—if only we bring his inquisitorial court up there.

Their low chuckling is cut by Voices from the church. The Needler pulls Martin down on the bench and has him cover his face. They are unnoticed during the following scene.

Colas emerges on the portico, tugging Andree after him. The distressed older men follow close behind.

CAPHARDS. Don't be witless, Colas. Return. You're shaming us.

COLAS [*bull-headedly*] Under the sky, Father. The heavens for witness.

CAPHARDS. Are you the Baron to compel Father Crion to your whim?

COLAS. The Baron marries with us, Uncle. And Barons always marry under the sky.

CAPHARDS. The right of the first night is older than antiquity, you fool!

COLAS. So is marriage. And they are both the first time for me.

F. CRION [to Caphards] Peace, my son. What does it matter? We have said the mass. The ceremony will be just as binding here.

COLAS. And speak it twice. The Baron stands with me.

CAPHARDS. Silence, boy! I like not the Baron, either, though I am his Mayor. I like not his clipping the coin's weight for my honest bolts of cloth. I like not his wanton dame who is now probably poisoning him against me. But I know our friends. We have none better than Father Crion.

F. CRION. Don't you think I feel your grief, my son? I have it here—here, like a monstrous tumor of guilt that is like to strangle me some day.

COLAS. How can you feel it, grey and celibate? My bride lies with the Baron tonight.

F. CRION. You are young, my son. And you pay tonight, I pay with you. Not in the same coin as you . . . not with this child, nor with your pride, but with a heavier payment, a heavier, my son.

COLAS [crying it out] Then where is Holy Mother Church, Father? The sin is with the Baron!

F. CRION. It is the way of the world, Colas, that even Christ's Church must in some things bow to earthly masters. Even my beloved house, the Church of Christ.

COLAS. Then woe, woe to the church!

CAPHARDS. Nephew!

The Mendicants now rise and reveal themselves.

NEEDLER [to Colas] Has no one told you men burn for this?

F. CRION. A good even to you, Brothers. Whence came you? Forgive the lad. He is not nineteen, nor is he himself today.

NEEDLER. I have seen the Devil burned out of a 12-year old for less.

CAPHARDS. Who are you? I don't recognize your habit. What do you here?

NEEDLER [after a whispered word to Martin who pretends to be vastly shocked] You will know this in good time. Go on with the nuptials. We are also bound for the castle. We will accompany the bride.

COLAS [so enraged that Caphards has to hold him] Bearing gifts to the Baron! I'm forced to share my wedding night, but not my wedding! Off with you, off, whoever you are!

NEEDLER. Serf-dog! You dare speak to me so?

CAPHARDS [interposing himself] I speak to you so. And I am not a serf.

Martin reaches for a hidden weapon. Caphards' hand goes to his dagger. They stand so a moment. Martin waits for his superior's command, then the Needler waves him down. They depart left.

F. CRION. Kneel, my children. [They do so.] Our Father in Heaven Who seeth into our hearts, forgive Thy son, bless Thou his marriage. And make Thou this woman as amiable as Rachel, as wise as Rebecca, as faithful as was Sarah—for she'll surely need every virtue to put up with this man. [Andree holds Colas down with a timid smile.] Colas. Do you take this woman to be your wedded wife, to love, comfort and protect her—[He falters, conscious of the irony as are the others.]—protect her in sickness and in health: and forsaking all others, keep you only unto her until death do you part?

COLAS. I do.

F. CRION. Andree. Do you take this man to be your wedded husband, to love, honour and obey in sickness and in health: and forsaking all others, keep you only unto him till death do you part?

ANDREE [terribly troubled as Colas stares at her, she turns her head aside a moment, then courageously] I do.

F. CRION. The ring, my son.

COLAS [taking it from Caphards and slipping it on Andree's finger] With this ring, I wed thee and plight my troth.

F. CRION [joins their hands] I pronounce you Man and Wife. May the Lord bless your union and love you and cherish you as you cherish the hope of heaven. [They kiss the crucifix, then kiss each other. The Priest and Caphards embrace them.]

Andree tries to return to Colas' arms.

COLAS. No. For all these words—and words, you're not mine till you're his. Go away.

Andree is again suddenly lost and frightened.

ANDREE. Father.

F. CRION. The Church accounts you innocent, my child.

ANDREE [fighting her way into Colas' arms] I'll not let you turn against me! Do you think it is easier for me than for you? I'm already so frightened, Colas.

COLAS [holding her close] I'll buy you from him! He shan't have you if it takes a lifetime of labor!

ANDREE. But you're giving four days now. Colas! What will be left for us to live on? [panicked] No. It's not worth it. I'll go. It will be over and buried.

COLAS [violently repelling her] Hurry, hurry, then! I see it clear! The spittle of your vow is still on your lips and you can't wait—you lust for him with the golden ring in his ear! The golden ring! Run! Run, go! [He is about to run off, but Caphards seizes him.]

CAPHARDS. You fool, hold! We'll see the Baron together. Though I think it ominous that he has not yet summoned me.

F. CRION. He has had nought of me, either.

CAPHARDS. It may even be better that I not ask of him anything dear to me. However reasonable to us once, what can his mood be now: a defeated knight and cuckolded, to boot, his attention wholly to his lady, how to injure her? But if he name a price—not overly fantastic—

you know how the woolen trade has fallen off these years—
COLAS. You will lend it to me, eh, Uncle? [He pulls free.] And I shall be a lifetime working it out?

CAPHARDS. Then, what do you want, Colas?

COLAS. I don't know any more, I don't know. I am beaten to the ground.

Caphards and F. Crion lead the way out, left. The lovers are a pathetically defenseless pair in their wake . . . as lights dim. Blackout.

ACT I

Scene 4

SCENE: *Later that evening. The great hall of Sir Remy's castle, poor and barbaric.*

The Baron and Lady Helaine sit in chairs at the head of the great table, at its left. Below them, on the upstage side of the board, are the men-at-arms. They are now at wine, though the table has not been entirely cleared of debris. A boar's head rests in a huge centered platter.

A spry little man with a quick, shrewd air, a passing Jongleur, is entertaining with a show of knives. A lute is strapped to his back. Some of the retainers follow the juggling with cries of delight; they have never seen the like. The Provost, sitting closest the the Baron, looks on contemptuously.

The Baron is urbanely tolerant of the exhibition; but his gaze is on his Lady. His manner is mockingly gracious and attentive. He is now pleasingly dressed and his fingers are bejewelled. Lady Helaine does not take her sullen eyes from him.

Behind his canopied chair, stands Giles, a handsome page of 12, anxious to anticipate his Lord's table wishes, anxious to propitiate him.

The Jongleur brings in his knives to a gratifying banging of the wooden wine cups, but is nettled by the Provost's disdain.

JONGLEUR [*with openly false amiability*] You did not like my poor skill, Monsieur Provost. It is a pity. But then, I am only a wandering jongleur.

GUY. Your knives are good enough—for table scraps. I have seen better.

JONGLEUR. I must really show you my best trick with a knife.

BARON [*as Guy ponderously begins to rise, motions him down. He throws the Jongleur a coin*] Bravo, Jongleur. A pretty show. But you have not amused my Lady. I have been away these many years and am but just returned. But so much did my Lady grieve for me, I have yet to see her smile. [*During his speech, he reaches for a dish of sweets, but Giles is already offering it to him. The Baron withdraws his hand and regards the page as he did his Lady. Bewildered, Giles sets down the dish. The*

Baron now picks a piece from it and offers it to Lady Helaine. She does not take it and he pops it into his mouth.]

The Friars enter from the right and approach the Baron. They bow and make the sign of the cross.

NEEDLER [*humbly, his head still cowed*] The blessings of God on your house, my Lord and Lady. We are pilgrims to the Pope at Avignon, hoping to bring to him many souls saved from the Devil's grasp. We have not broken fast today.

BARON [*after a long look at him, signs him to the bottom of the table*] We turn no one away—be his face like death. [*The Needler cowers his face more completely. He and Martin bow and withdraw to sit and eat ravenously. No one pays any more attention to them*] [*During this scene, the Jongleur has been drinking, his smiling eyes on Guy who disdains noticing him.*] Jongleur, have you a trick or jest will woo my Lady? What will you do next?

JONGLEUR [*tossing the coin in the air*] I think, since I am poor, why, I shall make money! [*The men shout their approbation.*] Ah, you like that? But you've always had this treasure in your midst. [*He leaps on the outer bench and reaching across the table, seems to pluck a coin from Guy's left ear. The Provost is too surprised to move.*] Ah! Did I not tell you? [*He appears to throw the coin into his mouth, then plucks another coin from the man's other ear.*] And yet another! You should look into this man, my Lord. There's a fortune in him! [*The Men shout with laughter.*] We must try his beard! [*But as he reaches for it, Guy seizes his hand and forces it open.*]

GUY. I'll take this coin and forgive you that other you robbed me of.

The laugh is now on the Jongleur. But he only smiles as the Provost throws him off.

JEHAN [*a soldier*] You have him, Guy!

BARON [*also amused*] What now, Jongleur?

JONGLEUR. My Lord, my Lady, good friends: my trick of tricks! [*He hurls a knife into the air, catches it, then whirling with unhesitant motion, snaps it at the table, crying out.*] The boar's ear, my Lord!

Jehan lifts up the head and displays it. The knife is imbedded in its ear!

JEHAN. Hey!

CLAUDE [*another soldier*] A miracle! The boar has a tusk in his ear!

BARON. Bravo, bravo, Jongleur! I have seen knife-throwing in my time, but not as a blind man throws.

JONGLEUR [*wiping the knife with a bit of bread*] I will show you something better my Lord. I will wager two coins against the coin the Provost has taken from me, that from 15 paces I will throw the knife at him where he sits and touch his ear—without drawing blood.

Guy rises wrathfully and the man at his right leans from him.

BARON [*placing a restraining hand on Guy*] I do believe you had best pay up—unless you insist on testing his skill further. [*as Guy still hesitates*] Come, it was his coin in the first place. Give it to him.

Guy throws the coin to the Jongleur amid his fellows' laughter. He would walk out, but the Baron pulls him down.

JONGLEUR. Jongleurs, Provost, fought at Crecy and again at Pointiers. They sing and play, but they can also play death.

The Baron's hand reaches for his goblet and Giles hastens to replenish it. But the Baron covers its mouth with his hand and the Page is forced to set down the pitcher and let the Baron help himself.

GILES. Why may I not serve you, my Lord? Shall I not be your squire some day?

BARON. Meantime, you are my Lady's page—as was Arnaut. [*to Guy, blandly*] No word from him yet? [*Guy barely shakes his head and an uneasy look passes among the Men. Even Giles knows the truth.*] I wonder at his mysterious departure. [*He raises his goblet to Helaine.*] To my Lady, who like Penelope loved not till her Lord returned. [*Helaine would spring up, but he keeps her down.*] What! Is everyone trying to leave me? Stay. We may yet amuse you. [*He drinks to her.*]

HELAINE. I am more amused than you think. For I know better than you what impels you to this humour. The girl comes to you tonight and you would fain remind me that what you will do in spite of me—

BARON. Jongleur! If that lute mean anything, a song! Do you know the Ballad of the Faithful Lady.

JONGLEUR. I do indeed, my Lord.

BARON. I'll prime you to it. [*He fills a cup.*]

JONGLEUR. My Lord, my Lady. [*He drinks, then sits on the bench, tunes the lute and sings.*]

My Lord he held her very close,

My Lady wept at parting.

Wilt thou be true to me? he begged.

She answered, As a starling!

The men know the song and laugh after each stanza.

HELAINE [*during the lute interlude*] Be done, my Lord. My only wish is to be your good wife. How can we live thus, separate and at odds?

JONGLEUR.

He did not know as he rode to war,

Which starling was her starling.

Was it the true star in the sky,

Or the faithless, feathered darling.

HELAINE [*during the interlude*] Come to me tonight. I will bathe you and brush out your hair and knead the kinks out of your poor body as you once loved my doing. I cannot sleep the nights alone.

JONGLEUR.

He rode and rode and fought and fought,

And pondered on his darling.

But only she knew what she meant,
By faithful as a starling.

HELAINE. Come to me tonight.

BARON [*moved, despite himself*] Tonight?

HELAINE. Come to me, Remy.

BARON [*recovering*] Ah, but—I expect my own lovely visitor tonight.

HELAINE. Then nothing is to be changed?

BARON. I am content. . . . Jongleur, I like you! Eat, drink—stay as long as you dare!

As the Jongleur goes heartily to the food, F. Crion, Capbards, Colas and Andree enter the hall.

F. CRION [*leaving the group and uncertainly approaching the Baron*] My Lord. . . . [*He makes a gesture of beseechment on behalf of Andree, but the Baron smiles at him with challenging blandness. At Capbard's nudge, Colas and Andree kneel humbly before the Baron.*]

BARON. Ah, what have we here? . . . A comely chit. What is your name, my dear?

ANDREE [*almost inaudibly*] Andree, my Lord.

BARON. You mustn't be frightened of me, Andree. [*She looks at him hopefully. To Colas*] I remember you: a sullen lad. Are you not Colas, son of Charles?

COLAS. My Lord, I—I wish to beg—my bride, my Lord—I ask—I—[*One of the Soldiers cannot restrain a contemptuous titter. It dries Colas up and he rises, Andree with him, terrified and already lost.*]

F. CRION [*taking Andree's appealing hand*] My Lord, they are so young—and they are in love, my Lord. Their timid vows are still in my ears as sacred and sweet to them and to God as if they were born noble. Will you not forego this right that can mean so little to you and so much to them?

BARON. You advise me, Father Crion. But why did you not advise my Lady?

Helaine begins to rise, but he pulls her down savagely, though his smile remains.

F. CRION. I see. Outrage will beget outrage like a rash of pride. [*turning to Andree*] Forgive me, daughter. I am no physician here. [*He consigns her to Christ, and shoulders stooped, goes out, left.*]

Capbards approaches and kisses the Baron's ring of seigniority.

CAPHARDS. Welcome home, Sire.

BARON. Capbards. How fortunate for me that something has turned up to turn you up at last.

CAPHARDS. You have not wished to be seen, my Lord.

BARON. I am now ready to be seen and, indeed, I shall soon call the fief together to be seen by all and in my turn to look upon all. Why are you here?

CAPHARDS [*curtseying to Helaine*] My Lord, you have on occasion foregone the right of the first night. Let the boy buy her from you. I stand ready to help him.

BARON [*to Helaine*] See how this mortal jealousy is

inbred in us—even in a serf. [*to Caphards*] You are related, I believe.

CAPHARDS. He is all that remains of my wife's family.

BARON. And thus you love him? . . . Everybody here loves everybody else but me! Let it be understood, Caphards—and by all within my hearing, [*He intends Helaine especially.*] I have returned not to abrogate my rights, but to enforce them!

CAPHARDS. You would do well, Sire, to show your subjects that you are not as your men have been since they returned three years ago without you.

BARON. I am my men!

CAPHARDS. They stole the wedding bird.

BARON. Then I stole it!

GUY. No so, my Lord! None stole it. [*rises*] As I am Guy de Gros, the bird attacked us! We used our teeth in self-defense. [*His ego is restored by the Men's laughter.*] Isn't it true? It's true, isn't it? We had to defend ourselves, didn't we?

BARON [*to Andree*] Remain. [*Andree rejoins Colas and they stand fearfully and forgotten in the developing scene.*] How long have you been Mayor, Caphards?

CAPHARDS. Ten years by your grace, five years by your father's.

BARON. And you have been fairly treated in that time? CAPHARDS. All fairly, Sire.

BARON. And on my departure, did I not select you to trust among all others to advise Lady Helaine in matters of trade and management? . . . How is it, then, your Lord languished three years in restraint, without ransom, like a common villain? [*Now he cannot help showing his pent-up anger.*]

CAPHARDS. The plague, the famine, Sire. Surely you knew of it.

BARON. The ransom, Caphards! You come here and these serfs ask my favour, but where was your favour to me?

CAPHARDS. We had already twice equipped you and your troop for this endless war—and your father before you. Then, when the blow fell and our knights were routed—

BARON [*enraged*] Routed!

CAPHARDS. Why, then, defeated, my Lord.

BARON. Neither routed nor defeated! Not in the chivalrous combat of knighthood, horse meeting horse, man to man, but by the Devil's own device of Mongol gunpowder. Cannonballs hurtling down the field, stampeding our noble beasts, tumbling them on us so that English peasants picked off our best armour with arrows. There's a topsy-turviness for you! Peasants killing knights! Powder and peasants tumbling the armed man on a horse! Do you not feel our very structure shaken? No wonder our own peasantry roared derision, and everywhere emboldened, rose to murder and pillage.

CAPHARDS. Not here, my Lord.

BARON. Where was the ransom? Three years! A thousand days, a thousand nights. I am returned impoverished on a borrowed mule, my barony impoverished, my armour in England, Grisart, my beloved war-horse, so brave, so constant to me, forfeit to an Englishman—and you stand here pleading against me.

CAPHARDS. Not against you, my Lord. For these children.

BARON. I am returned! Let none think I am defeated! I am my noble father's son! I am a Christian knight. I will hold my lands, my vassals, my serfs, and all my ancient rights against the deceits of hell itself! Thus do I stand! Seize me, this man! [*Jehan and Claude spring over the table and seize Caphards.*] Off with his belt and dagger! [*Caphards is disarmed.*]

CAPHARDS [*scarcely able to credit his senses*] What is this, my Lord? Am I your serf? I am your sworn vassal. You are my liege lord sworn to protect me.

BARON. From this moment, you are my serf. Caphards! Your land, your goods, your life is mine.

CAPHARDS. How so? I will have justice, my Lord!

BARON. Justice is mine. Have you forgotten the ancient law? It was serf you married, even this clod's sister.

CAPHARDS. I had your father's consent. And it was seventeen years ago, my Lord. She and my children gone from me these six years, gone with the plague.

BARON. Who treads my hen, is my cock! That is the ancient law. You have been cheating me these score of years, Caphards. I have permitted you to become arrogant and rich and influential until now your weaving vies with my land for hands—and common dirt have dark looks for me. I left you here to be my Lady's protector. But whom did you protect, even as you would now and I let you? I could've died in England for all you cared. [*He includes Helaine.*] Out, out with him, before his blood's on me!

The men begin hustling Caphards out when The Needler steps in their path with outstretched hands. Martin stands like a shadow behind him.

NEEDLER. My Lord, release this man and he will do you harm.

BARON. Let him by.

NEEDLER. My Lord! [*He blocks the soldiers.*] I come directly from Sir Hugh's fief. Know you his house, but two days ago, was burnt to the ground? The world is ill: you did proclaim it so yourself. For as you look upon me, my Lord, such Devil's spawn as this fired Sir Hugh's desmesne. Rebellion was the torch in heresy's hand. Let me examine this man for devil's marks, my Lord. For surely his impudence comes of Lucifer and will lead to compacts with him for vengeance upon you.

BARON. Who are you? Uncover.

NEEDLER [*Drops the cowl and triumphantly raises his malevolent face for all to look upon.*] I am he that is known as the Needler. [*A murmured and visible sensation of repulsion and fear move all.*] I am the Needler. I have

saved the holy souls of more than 300 men, women and children. For against the powers of the Devil, only purification at the stake can prevail.

BARON. You may cover your countenance. From facing the Devil so often, it might be the Devil's own.

NEEDLER. You are pleased to jest, Sire. But the timbers of your neighbor's home still smoke . . . and the Court of the Holy Inquisition knows its faithful.

BARON. Ah! Father D'Aussigny sent you! Has he not?

NEEDLER. Father D'Aussigny? We have not seen him in months. [*He and Martin exchange looks of innocence.*] I tell you, my Lord, I have overheard and observed that in your barony which has made my needle finger twitch! It is a sign there are those on your land who will not bleed no matter how deeply the needle strikes their flesh. They are the Devil's own, their hand equally against God and Master. Your priest has been careless, Sire. How long since you have had a heresy trial, a hanging, a burning, a quartering?

CAPHARDS. My Lord, have nought to do with it! Judge us yourself, if you must judge; you cannot love us less than the Inquisition.

BARON. Who asked you to speak?

CAPHARDS. Think of me as you like, my Lord: nor shall I forgive your crime against me. But heed me in this, for this I know: Who plays with the Devil, the Devil will play the devil with him. The Inquisition comes readily, but departs in its own time, my Lord.

NEEDLER. You dare damn the Holy Inquisition? Give the word, my Lord. Father D'Aussigny is overdue.

BARON. Confess it: the Dominican sent you to me.

NEEDLER. My Lord. We happen to be here only because we are passing through to Avignon.

BARON. We do not require his aid.

NEEDLER. You cannot mean this, Sire. Have you not noted the fire on the heath? I am told a Witches' Sabbath is preparing on your very land. Ask your Provost.

GUY. 'Tis so, my Lord. I hear it only awaits the coming of the Bride.

BARON. What bride?

GUY. Why, Satan's Bride, my Lord.

BARON. And who is she to be?

NEEDLER. That no one knows beforehand—except that she will come as she always comes to give herself to the Beast and by this act, inflame rebellion against all authority. My Lord, [*He approaches the Baron and speaks to him from behind his hand.*] unless you let Father D'Aussigny in, you will be a long time a knight without horse or armour.

BARON. I have but to call the fief together.

NEEDLER. Then why have you not done so, yet? My Lord, this discontent needs the Inquisition to bleed it.

BARON. I have bled it—by bleeding off this champion of rebellion. Till they disprove me, I will have them loyal.

NEEDLER. My Lord, and you brook heresy, you put your own loyalty to the Church in question.

BARON. We will deal with it ourselves and we find reason for it: I refuse to surrender my fief to the mercies of the Inquisitor.

NEEDLER. Beware your words, my Lord! The Inquisitor has ears even in these walls.

BARON. The ears are yours, Needler. We can lop them off. [*The Soldiers spring their swords out at him.*]

NEEDLER [*suddenly obsequious*]. My Lord, you mistake me. I have merely suggested Father D'Aussigny. But we are not brothers of the cloth nor of the Inquisitorial Court.

BARON. What are you, then?

NEEDLER. Why, lay brothers, my Lord, freemen. Your humble and expert servants who observe and probe and accuse—for a fee—to whatever court will employ us—your own, my Lord, your own court, if you wish.

BARON. Stay the night. But be gone by morning. [*The Needler covers his face and retires to the lower bench with Martin.*] Caphards, you have advised me for the last time. [*He holds out his hands for the chain of office. Caphards removes it from around his neck, bows, and flings it on the table. He goes. To a Soldier*] Proceed to his house. See that he doesn't enter till we take inventory of our goods there. [*The Soldier goes. The Baron now remembers his serfs. He regards the girl a long moment, then with a glance toward Helaine, strides to Andree and taking her head between his hands, tilts up her face.*] How fresh. How pure. [*He smells her hair.*] How sweet. [*He looks into her eyes.*] How pure and sweet and innocent. [*The last word is to Helaine, who rises but cannot leave.*] Tell me, little one, did you ever hear the tale of the knight who, wounded and alone, woke mad with thirst? Oh, crusted, famished thirst! And suddenly, from the ground before him, out gushed a clear and limpid stream with marvelous sound and sparkle, the sky in it as if the very heavens were happy to float upon its waters. The knight kneeled down, his mouth eagerly to it—and an adder rose from its false innocence and bit him to the brain. [*He walks away, bemused by the allegory—then turns upon Colas.*] You love this girl? You'd lay down your life for her? Wouldn't you? [*Colas does not answer.*] You offered your entire life's labour for her innocence! . . . You are an ass. I know you for an ass—and so does she. For all her innocence, she had already hurt you, hasn't she? I know she has. I know what lurks at the bottom of that clear water. Beware. [*To Andree*] When he is sweating out your bread or cutting wood for your warmth, what will you be doing, my innocent? . . . You lie! You were born treacherous. I see it in you. Here, I'll give you this jewel if you are truly innocent. [*He strips a ring off his finger and tries to force it on her.*] Here, take it! Take it, I say! [*Bewildered, she half reaches for it and he pulls it away.*] You are already guilty! [*She begins to cry and cover her face.*] You weep, do you? I don't believe you

however much you may believe yourself. I have the proof of it! I know you! You'll weep at his going from you—and laugh that he is gone. You'll swear to him: "to the end of time!"—and the end of time will be the morning. How pure you seem, how prettily your eyes drip water, but tell me, you vowed to this boy faithfulness until death, will you never break that vow, and of your own will break it? . . . You lie! You lie. I have the proof of it, you lie! Look you, I'll take him from you for a year—for a month—nay, for ten days I'll take him from you—whom will you love? [*He pulls her hand from her face.*] I want an answer! Whom will you love? You lie! I have the evidence here. [*He taps his chest.*] For all your vows and tears, you will not wait for him. You are an untrue girl! Shame upon you that you could not keep your lust!

ANDREE. I'd wait for him till death, my Lord.

BARON. You lie, you lie! I have the proof of it! [*confronting Helaine*] You would not wait a day!

HELAINE. Whom do you share, Remy, but yourself!

BARON [*returning to Andree*] You would not wait! You'd take—[*He grips her by the shoulders and turns her toward Giles.*] even this child to bed with you! [*At this point, unable longer to bear his public excoriation of her, Helaine dashes for the exit. But he bounds before her, blocking her.*] I have not given you permission to leave! [*Suddenly, she attacks him with all the power of her outrage and guilt. He sweeps her off her feet and holds her tightly while she fights herself into exhaustion. To Colas*] Let my men bargain with you. [*He carries Helaine out.*]

There follows a long pause, then the soldiers begin converging on Colas and Andree. While Guy blocks Andree's movement, the others seize Colas and tie him in his shirt while he madly fights them.

COLAS. He said to bargain! You must bargain with me. Ask what you will! [*And still struggling, they half carry him out, right.*] I'll kill you for this! . . . Andree!

We hear the chains of the draw-bridge, then a heavy door shut to and a bar slammed into place. The men re-enter and pausing a moment to look at the tableau of Guy and Andree, casually proceed to take seats on the bench, their eyes never from the pair. Now, Guy grasps her wrist.

ANDREE [*to the friars*] Brothers in Christ!

Martin is about to rise, but the Needler holds him down. They do not move, Martin watching in frank fascination, the Needler cowed and secret. The Jongleur fingers his lute with detached derision for the soldiers.

Andree collapses in Guy's arms. He looks about to his companions and a lascivious smile of mutual recognition circles and binds them.

Dim out and curtain.

ACT I

Scene 5

SCENE: *Later that night. A corner of the parapet of the castle tower. Far off, the small glow of the fire on the heath.*

The Baron leans in an opening of the wall. An armed lookout stands behind him.

BARON. My father's barony . . . all wrapped in darkness from me . . . a mist of mysteries lighted without light by torches on the heath. I must take hold of it soon. What do they there when the Bride appears? Out of what foulness does she come to do her foulness?

GUARD. It is said sometimes as many as two and three thousand gather from the fiefs about us.

BARON. Our own among them. . . I must take hold of it.

GUARD. Did you know, my Lord, there is a great tournament making at Calais with many fabulous prizes of moneys and armours? Last year, Sir Edmund returned home with eight ransoms and a marvelous coat of Persian mail.

BARON. And what should I tilt them with, my tool? Go about your guard! I have enough reminders of my nakedness without you. [*The man turns away, but stops, listening.*] Ask who it is.

GUARD. Who is it?

HELAINE [*off-stage*] Are you there, Remy? [*The Guard looks to the Baron who waves him away. After a moment, Helaine appears, a cloak about her shoulders, her hair down over it. The Baron doesn't move. She stops before him.*] When I woke, you were gone from me. . . Oh, my Lord that was mine again. My love. Remy. . . Oh, the fury in you. Shall I ever be able to draw it out of you? Or out of myself for being so wanton. And yet, this is what I am and this is what I did and cannot help it now though I shed tears or blood enough to fill the Seine.

BARON. You speak like a whore. I should've killed you.

HELAINE. I am what I am, my Lord. And even so, I never loved anyone but you. I swear it to you.

BARON. And how did you swear it to Arnaut?

HELAINE. Speak not his name, my Lord. For I as surely murdered him as if these hands had done it. He was no rival to you. But came for my wanting you, out of very loneliness to feel your strength on me again. Never abandon me again, my Lord. I cannot be without you.

BARON. You'll find many more Arnauts.

HELAINE. Do not speak his name. I beg you, let the time of your absence be as if it never happened. As if I am only what I am at this moment, as I pray to be: yours and yours alone. [*He sits in the aperture, turning from her.*] Remy. . . Oh, I am not suggesting we can go back. I am not the woman either of us thought we knew. But

for the matter, neither are you the man who rode off on Grisart. You are four years older and many things have happened with you that I shall never know. You know with whom I slept, but I do not know with whom you spent your nights—nor do I care to know. Enough for me that you are home at last—and so full of pains and grievances and angers—and that I am your wife, in love with you, Remy.

BARON [*rising*] We'll work it out in the night, eh? [*He walks away from her.*]

HELAINE. My Lord, I beg you. The crime whips me across the face, but it whips you, too. We shall not find peace together in this constant whipping. And both of us, we are still young and ardent for each other. Oh, there's not a man in all the world could do to me what you do. I was not fully sensory or alive until tonight. Did you not recognize my waking, Remy? I am more in power than ever I deemed possible. I am more woman, more yours, I desire you more tenderly, more tenderly, more brutally, more urgently—with all my woman's use—and that is all the use I have or know.

BARON [*He is staring at her with aroused, but painfully confused love.*] Aye, aye, aye. Aye, you're indeed more beautiful than I remembered, more wild, more maddening. But I loved you, Helaine, when you were not half what you are now. How often I dreamt of you—in the day as well as in the night—consoling myself with the hope of return. And when at last I was actually pointing across the Channel and every mile of France was taking me closer to my barony, my long lost confidence began to ebb back, a long absent eagerness returned to my throat so that I was like to choke—but that I gave it out in noise and singing. You will never know what it meant to be going home—and home to you. [*He seizes her violently by the shoulders.*] Look at you, Helaine! There is no one like you—so vivid and tempestuous and desirable—and so loose and rotten. Tell me, how shall I live out this most damnable defeat to my manhood?

HELAINE. I'll help you do it—with my life, Remy, if only you help me.

BARON. You never will. There's that in me will not let you. When I left, you took yourself a lover. Now I am returned—you have neither lover nor husband. You are unwomaned. You are a thing in feminine clothing—a lady—Lady Helaine, the empty Lady of the castle. [*shouting*] Guard! Guard, ho!

GUARD [*running in*] My Lord.

BARON. Summon me all of the fief for tomorrow noon! Hearing no excuse!

GUARD. What shall I cry, my Lord?

BARON. Cry? Cry every devastation known to your heart! Cry cuckolding and betrayal! Cry seed on a stone and blinding lust!

GUARD. What shall I cry, my Lord?

BARON. You common dolt! Summon the fief to the

great hall tomorrow noon: I'll do my own crying to them so they'll cry indeed! Be gone! [*The Guard goes.*] I shall expect you there, also. Beside me—as is your Lady's duty. You shall see how, for all my defeats, I shall douse the fire on that heath and the fire in my house.

HELAINE [*as he is leaving*] I shall not be there! Drive me from your bed and I shan't conduct my office outside it!

BARON. This you will continue to do: your duties as Lady of the castle.

HELAINE. I swear you shan't make me stir from my chamber.

BARON. I shan't personally try. My hands will never again touch you. I'll send someone—since you make such a fetish of brutality. [*He goes.*]

Blackout.

ACT I

Scene 6

SCENE: *An hour later. The green before the unseen castle drawbridge at the left, identified by the sound of chains letting down the bridge and the dim light that pours out of the castle door.*

Jehan appears with a torch held high. Robin and Claude follow, bearing Andree's beaten body between them, her head lax, her hair over her face and streaming to the ground. Behind and detached from them, comes the Jongleur, small pack swinging negligently from his hand. He stops half way as the men continue and place the girl on the grass before a mounting block. She moans and lies as dead. The men glance uneasily at one another, then start back to the castle. They pass the Jongleur, but he does not move, and they go on and out.

JEHAN. You coming in, Jongleur? [*The Jongleur spits aside.*] What do you use for a wife?

He exits. The bridge is drawn up and it is once more semi-dark. The Jongleur swings the pack to his back, then kneels beside Andree, compassionately wiping the hair from her face, but frightened off when:

ANDREE [*not fully conscious moans*] No . . . no . . . no . . . no . . .

The Jongleur sits on the ground, his back against the block, watching her, when he hears the sound of someone approaching from the right. He scrambles behind the block.

Colas enters, followed by Caphards. They stop in the dark at extreme right.

CAPHARDS. Come away, Colas. Wait for her at home.

COLAS. I can't.

CAPHARDS. We've been wandering about all night . . . to what good?

COLAS. What is happening to her there? She was so frightened. And yet—that golden ring in his ear. She said, Go, to me . . . that golden earring!

CAPHARDS. Shame to you. The girl loves you.

COLAS. [Utters a cry, hands to his bursting head. Then quietly] I'll wait here. She may need me. She may be hurt.

CAPHARDS. The Baron will not hurt her, you fool. It is only a man and a woman.

COLAS. But the soldiers.

CAPHARDS. On her nuptial night? They would not dare so fearful a crime.

ANDREE [moans] No . . . no . . . no . . .

COLAS [discovering her] Andree! Ha! Ha! [His grief, his horror, is throaty and animal in its use of sounds rather than words.] Andree! Andree. [Caphards kneels to minister to her, but Colas brushes him aside and Caphards stands helplessly watching. Colas tries to revive her. In his despair, he lifts her up and carries her about like a baby, but she moans and turns her head away.] It's me, me, Colas, Colas. It's Colas, Colas. Wake, wake up, my little, my pretty, it's me, Colas. Only look once. Colas's with you. Colas. [Not knowing what to do with her or himself, he puts her down, and kneels beside her.] Wake! It's me. No more, no more, my pretty. Hear me: you are not fouled for me, my little wife. You're innocent. Your soul is innocent. Only wake. Look at me. [with sudden joy to Caphards] She is looking! She recognizes me! Andree, my love, my heart, little wife, you see it's Colas, Colas, my own. [He lifts her shoulders and head and, recognizing him, she turns her head into his body and bursts into terrible weeping. His helplessness drives him mad. Dropping her into Caphards' arms, he leaps up, searching for weapons with which to avenge her. Finding nothing but stones, he hurls them at the raised bridge, crying.] Come out! Out! At you! . . . Cowards! Rapists! Oh, that I was a battering ram! And every hair an arrow and a bolt. [Suddenly the bridge falls, and, in the small flood of light, Guy de Gros enters, sword in hand.]

GUY [stopping some distance away] You! I'll teach you to trouble decent folk in the night!

But even as Colas crouches to spring at him, unseen by any, the Jongleur rises and flings his knife. Guy falls and Colas, completely mad, uses the knife to stab him again and again. The Jongleur goes swiftly out, right.

CAPHARDS [trying to pull Colas away] Come off him! They're coming! Colas!

He runs into the darkness as the other men dash in and kill Colas.

JEHAN. The Mayor was with him. He went there. After him! [They run out.]

Andree has watched the slaying on her knees. Now, she crawls to Colas' body and uttering a long, anguished moan, drops her head on him a moment. High to her right, the flame on the heath flares to the sky.

ANDREE. The flame! The flame on the heath! [She rises as out of a trance and crying.] Vengeance! Vengeance! Hurries unsteadily off toward it.

The Needler and Martin, having entered with the

Soldiers and stopped at the extreme left, now go to stand over the dead. They look down at them, then up at the portentous sky, then turn toward each other.

Dim to blackout.

ACT I

Scene 7

SCENE: Later. The heath.

The seated wooden figure of Satan, shoulders covered by a shaggy bide, commands a knoll, filling the sky with a profound, melancholic dread, his shadow brooding on the world. He is turned squarely toward us and his horned head looks down its ageless wisdom on the celebrants below, a ragged folk, some deformed, some wearing eye-masks, others, masks of animals and horned demons. A huge wood-fire behind the knoll, lights the service, its flickers and ribbons of smoke making the scene as a pit in hell.

All eyes are on the Witch sitting on the knoll beside Satan, scanning the heath beyond. She is an impressive woman, old and ample enough to be the mother of man. Her face is half-bidden by the shawl cutting across one eye, but we sense the capacity of her spirit for enveloping, contagious power.

A gangling, rough-bearded Shepherd, wearing a twisted horn on his head, stands down left, strumming a self-made lute.

The scene has a waiting quietude about it: the lull before the storm.

SHEPHERD [singing, softly and sadly]

We are men as much as they.

We have a heart as big as they.

We can suffer no less than they.

Man on his knees, man on a horse

Sleep the same under the gorse.

A WOMAN [anxiously, to the Witch] Mother, oh, Aged One, will she come soon?

CELEBRANTS. Tonight? Will the Bride come tonight, Mother?

THE WOMAN. How long it is to wait.

PIERRE [a wiry, little fellow with a comic, clever face] Would you be his Bride, then? [The Woman shrinks and hides her face.] Patience, my dear ones. She will come . . . tonight or tomorrow or ten tomorrows hence, but she will come, won't she, Mother?

CELEBRANTS.

I have been here six successive nights.

I have been waiting eight nights.

PIERRE. Ho, when she comes, he'll marry! He'll be pleased with us and help us! [claps his hands] Come, let the horn watch for her. I have a marvelous dumb show for you!

CELEBRANTS. A show! . . . O, clever Pierre! . . .

Show us! . . . Show us the Bride, rather! . . . Quiet! Play it, Pierre.

PIERRE. Make space! [*The people clear to left and right. He claps his hands.*] Tune up, Shepherd! Actors, mimes!

SHEPHERD [*Striking the strings hard. His tune is now strong and bitter.*]

We are men as much as they.

We have a heart as big as they.

We can suffer no less than they.

We are men as much as they.

PIERRE. Why are we here? Because God is our enemy as He is his! He loves only his priests and nobles.

A pantomime is enacted, comically and crudely, though with the rhythm of a dance. A serf stands in the field working the soil under a blistering sun. Shoulders bowed, he scoops the earth, stops, looks to the sun, wipes the sweat from his face, scoops again, stops to indicate his belly is empty, his mouth wants food, but it is useless and he gets to scooping again. Now Pierre, as a fat, feeble, comically sanctimonious priest hobbles by, coughing and spitting thinly. The serf begs the priest to intercede for him with Heaven. The priest questions him with rubbing fingers, but the serf has nothing to give him. The priest throws him a niggardly, inattentive gesture of a cross and passes on. Some few steps on, he drops to his knees in an attitude of prayer, his back to the serf. The serf makes a self-pitying gesture and returns to his work. Now the Lord, stout and arrogant, rides in on a mettlesome stick, chasing an unseen animal across the field, riding the land over in every direction while the serf points to his levelled stalks. Outraged at such impudence, the Lord whips him. The man cries out to the priest who, from the corner of his eye seeing who is doing the whipping, pretends to be too busy praying to notice. The Lord rides off. A man and woman enter and kneel before the dying peasant. They anxiously beckon the priest, indicating that their friend is in need of the hope of heaven. Again, the priest asks with rubbing fingers and seeing they have nothing for him, scarcely turns fully around as he throws the man a contemptuous little cross and prayer. The mourners make a wordless outcry of grief as the man dies. Now the Lord rides in again. Desiring the woman, he seizes her and when the man protests, runs him through. Again the priest has chosen not to see. But noticing him, the Lord decides to make his peace with God at once. Riding up with the woman under his arm, he taps the priest on the shoulder and the priest springs up all eager service and obsequiousness. The Lord throws him a purse of money from one hip and a purse from the other, then indicates his wish for absolution for the murder and for the contemplated rape. At once, the priest goes into a veritable frenzy of crossings, sprinklings, supplications, ending by confusedly embracing the woman. Recognizing his error, he masks his face in hypocritical shame and accords the blessed embrace to the Lord.

Throughout the dumb show, the audience reacts with simple identification, laughing, jeering, crying out their pity and their bitterness.

CELEBRANTS.

He works so hard . . . He's hungry . . .

Look how to the priest, we are less than human.

Here comes the nobleman.

Oh, the armed brute, riding down the year's grain.

And all for a rabbit. It was so with me last year

. . . And me . . . And me.

That is how it was with my wife.

Look, how God forgives him everything.

The playing must go through the incidents as rapidly as they can be established.

The morality playlet is cut off toward the end by a piercing, long drawn horn. All freeze with portentous knowledge and look to the top of the knoll. The Witch is on her feet, looking down the other side of the hillock. Now she turns toward the celebrants and drops the shawl to her shoulders, revealing a face scarred and blinded on one side and horns knobbing out of her head. Slowly, she descends and turns about to await the comer.

Andree appears on the other side of the knoll, climbing to the top. She stands there, swaying and as in a trance.

THE WITCH. Are you come to be Satan's Bride? . . . Answer me, child, will you be his Bride?

ANDREE. Vengeance! Vengeance for Colas!

CELEBRANTS [*whispering in awe*] She is come. . . It is she. . . The Bride. . .

Andree descends and falls on her knees before the Witch.

PIERRE [*looking closely at Andree*] Why, it's Andree! She's from my fief. What's happened, Andree? This was your marriage night?

THE WITCH. This is her marriage night. [*She puts back the girl's streaming hair and gazes into her face. The Celebrants shout their joy.*] Kneel to our Master! [*At her sign, the horn sounds again. They kneel and intone the key phrases of her invocations.*] Satan, Oh, Exile of Eternity! Thou Angel hurled from heaven by a jealous God, outcast and out-lawed even as are we, Dread Spirit of the Air, we who know their suffering in our bodies, take thou thy Bride out of our mortified flesh. Germinate the earth through her, thy Bride, with harvest and with joy. Master! Creator of the Earth! [*Now she suspends a wreath high above Andree's head and a gasp of pity and horror is forced from the Celebrants.*] With this crown of the violets of death, we give her thee and through her, all of us, for thine evermore!

She sets the crown on Andree's head. Still as in a trance, Andree is raised up and swung on to Satan's lap. At the same moment, the horn sounds a long piercing scream, cut off at top volume. Frightened and bewildered, as if partially awakened, Andree gazes up at Satan's head: then, as the horn breaks off, whirls about to stare on the crowd

below, her back pressed against Satan's body, her arms stretched against his chest.

CELEBRANTS. The Bride!

THE WITCH. Strike her dead, God! You cannot!

PIERRE [*In the priest's smock, leaps into the air.*] The Witches' Round! Up and couple! Dance out the pain, dance in the joy! Our Master marries!

Men and women throw themselves into the intoxicating, whirling frenzy of the Round. The music, now supplemented by drums, is weirdly like the Shepherd's tune, but cacophonous and having a mesmerizing beat. Without initial choice of partners, without seeing them, the couples dance back to back, arms locked behind them, backs often touching, until by the miracle of rhythm, they become a huge, undifferentiated madness.

Now, Andree is caught in the rhythm, at first, swaying like the communicants, her back to Satan. Suddenly, she screams with wild release, stripping her body as naked as permissible. The dancers, shocked still, drop to their knees, then sway with her outpouring.

ANDREE [*possessed turns toward Satan*] God didn't want me for a bride. Take me, Satan! Here! Here! [*grasping his body in her arms*] Vengeance! Vengeance, Satan! Let me burn out their bowels with death and corruption! My soul for their deaths! Take me, take me, Satan! Take me! [*She presses to him convulsively.*]

[*The communicants cry out their frenzied pain with her. Now, she flings herself on her back in Satan's lap, writhing and bumping uncontrollably.*] Satan! Satan! Satan!

The Witch leaps to her side and kneeling over her body, plucks her flesh symbolically, and tosses it to the hands reaching all about her.

THE WITCH. Eat, my little ones! Eat of the Bride! Eat of the Eternal Woman, her eternal pain, her eternal sacrifice, for tomorrow she dies in flame for all of us that we may win to freedom and life everlasting! Eat!

Blackout.

ACT II

Scene 1

SCENE: *The hall, noon of the next day.*

The chairs of the Baron and Lady are on a small dais facing the right. Below the dais, are a small table and two benches, one looking right, the other toward the audience. Ink, quills and parchment are on the table. Jehan and Claude are standing downstage right, staring angrily out of the castle door into the hot sun.

JEHAN. Why don't they come in instead of gathering there like a sucking sandpit? The Baron will burst in on us at any moment.

CLAUDE. As if he's not already angry enough with us. Here's Robin.

Robin enters.

ROBIN. Say they won't move till she comes.

CLAUDE. She?

The three look at one another sourly.

ROBIN. Told you we shouldn't have done it to her.

JEHAN. You told us! Sprawled on her like any of us, you told us. Get them started or we'll really be in trouble. Go with him, Claude. Get the men moving and the women will tag on. [*Claude and Robin go. Shouting his aid*] Give them the flat of the sword and they ask for it! . . . Come on! In, in with you, you clods! The sun's at noon! Inside, inside! [*The Men begin shambling in. Paley's Woman is caught among them and carried in in spite of herself.*] You there! You with the stink of sheep on you, you keep the Baron waiting, and I'll have your balls for breakfast! [*The Shepherd enters and Jehan shoves him. Last to enter is Caphards, wearing a hood over his head.*] Come along, you women! Come on, it's cooler inside. What's wrong with you?

CLAUDE [*reentering*] Won't budge till she joins them. Say the castle isn't safe.

JEHAN [*exploding*] The castle not safe! [*Then he understands and turns self-consciously on the men.*] If any of you think you're playing a game. . . .

CLAUDE. There! That must be her crossing the field . . . Or is it her? . . .

JEHAN. Seems like her, but taller, straighter. Moves like a lady. [*apprehensively glances to the left entrance*] If he marches in now, won't we look darling explaining that the women are out there because they don't feel safe with us. [*He folds his arms and prepares to wait out Andree's progress.*] Why ever did the Lord make women with pockets?

PALEY'S WOMAN [*asking of those around her*] Why are we here? Have you heard anything? Do you know? My little boy's alone. I must get back. Do you know why we're here?

SHEPHERD [*just loud enough for the soldiers to hear him*] Why, I suppose because the bride was raped. Why else?

PALEY'S WOMAN. But would he bring us here for their raping her?

SHEPHERD [*confidentially*] No, my love. But that is what we must keep him to.

PALEY'S WOMAN [*to Pierre*] Do you know why we're brought here?

The Needler and Martin pass through into the castle.

PIERRE. Did you see that one with the cowl over his face? He's the Needler.

PALEY'S WOMAN. The Needler? It's the Inquisition, then . . . Mother of Christ.

The possibility makes all stare in fear after the Needler. The dread words, Needler, Inquisition, pass among them.

A BENT OLD MAN. It would be no more than the wicked deserve. [*directing it at a Young Fellow*] I could think of some would be better for a burning.

PALEY'S WOMAN [*panicked*] And I went to the heath. I went to her for the boy's sake, for an herb to save his life. What was I to do? Oh, Holy Mother of Christ.

A BENT OLD MAN. Why didn't you appeal to God and his priest, woman?

PALEY'S WOMAN. I did. And Father Crion sprinkled him with holy water till he was like to drown—and every day, he died a little more.

PIERRE. But now, he lives?

PALEY'S WOMAN. He lives.

PIERRE. Then stop this sniffing. Be happy in your physician.

PALEY'S WOMAN [*turning into herself*] Oh, look down upon me, Mother Mary. You who had so many children and yet wept for Jesus, forgive me, he is my only son.

CAPHARDS. There's to be no Inquisition. The Baron declared against it in my hearing.

The men are not relieved.

SHEPHERD [*scratching the big table with a fingernail, then examining it and smelling it*] Ah, fine thick grease! Our Baron lives well, thank heaven.

He makes sure the soldiers hear him.

PIERRE. Let me have a smell. Ah, it's a kind of a feast in itself just to be asked here.

There are snickers. Tensions are being eased.

JEHAN [*in exasperation*] Look at that girl. I've a mind to go out there and whip her in. . . . Come, let's get the women started. They can see her now.

He and Claude go.

A YOUNG MAN. Why do you think we're summoned? Can it be this everlasting war with the English? My grand-dad marched in the war. My dad marched in it twice—till he was killed in it. I've already had my bellyful. Is he planning to march us off again?

CAPHARDS. He can't do that till he wrings us of a new horse and armour. It's probably that we're here for.

YOUNG MAN. Oh . . . But how wring us? I'm dryer than a buried bone.

SHEPHERD. The longer we can keep him off a war horse, the less of its tail will be lifted in our noses.

PIERRE [*clowning*] Ho! But I'm eager for that horse! Let me at those English! I bear them a great grudge that they shucked our Baron of his armour and set him down on his feet no better than a tramp on a road.

SHEPHERD. He'll not stick the new horse better. That Mongol powder will some day blow the castle down, let alone the castellan off his horse.

YOUNG MAN. The castle down? You're as wooly-headed as your sheep!

PIERRE. But, my Lord, with the castle down, what will become of our most noble and chivalrous style of life?

The Women begin filing in on the laughter. Before all are inside, the Baron enters, F. Crion, the Needler and Martin with him. In resentful astonishment, he watches the women collect between him and the men, their silence

ominous, their eyes cast sullenly down. The Soldiers enter last, remaining at the entrance.

BARON [*when all are in*] Does no one recognize me? No curtsy to your Lord? [*To Jehan*] Why do they enter so late? And why stand before their men so? Where's the girl?

JEHAN. Coming, my Lord.

BARON [*Relieved, but bitter, he looks again at the women.*] Why so sullen toward me? [*The women raise their eyelids and their eyes tell him. Disconcerted, he wheels toward the dais.*] Where is my Lady? Having sent the boy for her, must I now send someone after him? [*to Robin*] See what detains her. [*Robin is on the way out, when Giles running in, stops in confusion.*] Well! How long are we to wait?

GILES. She will not join you, Sire.

BARON [*to Robin*] Go to her. Say if she's not here directly, we'll come for her. [*Robin hurries off. To Giles*] Go and play somewhere, boy.

GILES [*having taken it for granted that he would stay*] But, my Lord. . . .

BARON. Go. Go, out of my sight, go.

GILES. It is Arnaut. But I am not Arnaut, my Lord.

BARON. Neither was Arnaut Arnaut—until he was Arnaut. Go, you're a good lad, but you're too young for this.

GILES. I am older than you think, Sire. [*With this conscious ambiguity, he leaves. The Baron stares after him, then irritably gestures the friars.*]

BARON. Take your places. [*They go to the small table and sit on the bench facing the assembly. A wave of apprehension washes over it. Furious and impatient to begin, the Baron sits in his chair and pulls on his earring.*] Well, why are we waiting? Proceed, Father Crion.

F. CRION [*looks lost a moment, then speaks privately to the Baron*] My Lord, for the last time, I beg you, reconsider. The crime was in the castle, not on the heath.

NEEDLER [*hastily joining the Baron*] The crime on the heath takes precedence, Father Crion. It is first because God is first.

BARON [*to F. Crion*] Can you say how much of the Devil is in them? My best man murdered, Satan firing the night? We must stand together in this—or together be swept away.

NEEDLER. Profoundest wisdom, my Lord. Father D'Aussigny will rejoice to hear it. You are proven in Christ. We'll send Brother Martin for him directly the hearing is done.

BARON. Who said anything about Father D'Aussigny? Why didn't you intervene for the girl—or seek me out?

NEEDLER. I am no martyr, my Lord.

BARON. Was it not rather because you desired this—to compel me to the Inquisitor?

NEEDLER. My Lord!

BARON. But for this crime, I'd now be making my just

demands to them and have war-horse and armour and money for my debts.

NEEDLER. It cannot be helped now, my Lord. And a knight without armour is no knight. Add to this offense the Mayor, whom the people trust, sworn against you, and the heath in motion, this very castle, like Sir Hugh's may go up in wrath. Your only salvation is the Inquisition.

F. CRION. My Lord, your salvation is in justice.

BARON. I don't like this any more than you, Father. But I am maneuvered. How else shall I turn to restore myself?

F. CRION. Do justice to the girl.

NEEDLER. Let God do her justice. Your few soldiers are your only friends. Do justice to God.

BARON. And to Father D'Aussigny?

NEEDLER. He is your seignor and friend, my Lord.

BARON. My money friend, my friend for a piece of me? No, we shall not have the Dominican's Court, but our own private inquisition—as you yourself suggested yesterday—and as I hear other lords are beginning to do. Such as it'll be, it'll suffice to return their obedience to God and to me. Proceed, Father.

F. CRION [*reluctantly*] Let us pray.

The Needler, defeated, returns to his bench. All in the room kneel with him, the Baron with ungracious compliance.

F. CRION. Our Father Who art in heaven, we beg you give us of your infinite mercy and wisdom, that we may conduct ourselves in what is to come with true dedication to Thy intention toward us. Amen. [*All rise. He glances uncertainly at the Baron.*]

BARON. Go on, Father Crion. This is more in your province of the defense of the Church than in mine as castellan.

F. CRION. It has been said, by whom I do not know—that there are some in our community who have fallen from God's way and whether through perversity or conviction or lightness of faith—or weariness, for God tries us sorely sometimes for that we are born with sin which no sum of tribulations can ever expiate—some among us, I am told, have sought out or are seeking the path of God's enemy, Beelzebub. If this is true—and I hope it is not true so monstrous a sin, for as you are my charges and my children: the sin would be mine as well: I christened many of you, married you, baptized your babies, listened to your innermost confessions, aye, and brought Christ's consolation to your dying: therefore I pray it may not be so—but if it be so, I beg of you, for your soul's sake, for your hope of eternal life, for the love I bear you, I beg of you reconsider your conduct and reaffirm Christ in your hearts.

BARON [*unable to bear this pusillanimity*] I fail to understand you, Father Crion! You beg, you hope, you will not believe! It might almost be yourself in the dock, not they. [*rising*] I have not summoned you to confess your-

selves, for I am not so famous as to believe that anyone compacting with the Devil will publicly declare it. [*Robin returns.*] What! Where is she?

ROBIN. My Lady swears she will not budge. [*He runs a finger tenderly over a face scratch.*]

BARON. Swears with her claws, does she? [*to Claude*] Go with him. Fetch her! I will not brook rebellion in our very house! [*The Soldiers go.*] Father, I'm too full of justified grievance to let your over-Christian softness speak for me. You may as well sit down. I feel neither the Church nor my rights defended in your manner. [*F. Crion looks about rather lost, and hating to sit with the Needler, sits center of the bench before the dining board. The Baron moves down to the people, striding before them, making some of them cower under his rage.*] Is it whispers, words carried by the wind, words said in my ear by no one that I have heard? I left a fief in which serf and vassal—and Lady!—were dutiful and hard-working and content. I return to my own France, my castle and my home, where love and obedience and forgetfulness of suffering should have awaited me, I summon you in innocent faith to right your grievances, to offer you my counsel and experience for setting our fief in order, and between my summons and your gathering, you burst into a lashing of outspoken challenges and threats against me. Aye, and more than threats, killings. My sergeant, the defender of our fief and castle, killed! However justly—dealt with by serfs as if I did not exist. And over all, the fire on the heath burning my eye, that flaunting of hell's rebellion against Christ from which comes this unutterable disobedience, this secretiveness and conspiracies and killings and rebellions against your seignor who was placed above you by God and Christ to be your master and your guide.

Helaine has entered, followed at a respectful distance by her escort. The Baron directs his last phrase to her as well.

HELAINE. What do you wish of me, my Lord.

BARON [*indicating her chair*] Your office! Note what happens to those of ugly hearts. [*Helaine sits.*] Now, am I beset on every side. Under my own roof-tree, and I am not secure! And you would be spared, denounce your heretics and witches! . . . A full measure of grain for the first accuser! . . . What! Is no one hungry? I have been feeding you too fat! . . . Why, where's the Witch? The Witch of the heath? Where's she? Not come, Jehan?

JEHAN. We could not ferret her out, my Lord. Nor would they point us to her.

BARON. Blessed Saints! That Devil's Dam needs no denouncing: her every hour condemns her for a witch. You! You with the sick face. [*It is Paley's Woman. She shrinks from his finger and can only shake her head negatively.*] You've seen the harridan. Sought her out for a love potion or a pox on some poor innocent. Where does she keep herself?

PALEY'S WOMAN. I don't know. I never went to her. I never—no—

BARON. You lie! *[She shakes her head wordlessly. He looks about.]* Pierre? Why, now we shall make a beginning! I remember you for the liveliest grasshopper in the countryside. Where's the witch?

PIERRE *[stupidly]* The Witch, My Lord?

BARON. The Witch, the Witch!

PIERRE. The Witch, my Lord . . . *[He drops to his knees.]* I swear as I was with you at Poitiers where the ironballs scared the horses—*[His friends recognize that he is clowning and enjoy it.]*

BARON. I didn't ask about Poitiers! Where is the Witch? The Witch, you fool?

PIERRE. The Witch, my Lord?

BARON. The Witch! What of the heath?

PIERRE. The heath, my Lord?

BARON. The heath, the Witch, you simpleton!

PIERRE. My wits are gone like the horses. I have forgotten the question. The heath?

BARON. The Witch! *[Strikes him across the mouth. Exasperated that he should have soiled his hand so, he wipes it on his clothes.]* What is more baffling than a peasant! You, Shepherd, tell me you have never seen the Witch.

SHEPHERD. But I have seen her, my Lord.

BARON. You saw her?

SHEPHERD. Many times. Usually at the first glimmer of dawn, before I or the sheep were fully awakened from dozing.

BARON. An admission! Are we to get on at last?

SHEPHERD. Oh, I've seen her, my Lord. Sometimes as a dread apparition all swathed in night mists like a winding sheet. Sometimes as a werewolf, my Lord, more fearful yet, her head all bloody with feeding, running without track or trace—as a shadow might run.

BARON. Her lair, Shepherd?

SHEPHERD. Her lair? I never learned that, my Lord.

BARON. You lie! You never followed her?

SHEPHERD. Follow so devilish a thing? My Lord, I could scarce hide my head fast enough against seeing so much of it as I did.

BARON *[retreats to the dais]* I sense a mockery here. Is it because I am your mock-lord without horse or armour? But these I shall soon have. Needler take over. I should have left this matter entirely in your hands. *[He sits.]*

NEEDLER *[He has been contemptuous of the mismanagement. With a slight bow as he rises]* If only because I have the more experience in it, my Lord. *[Uncovering his head, he lets the people have the full effect of his portentous countenance, then steps before the small table.]* I counseled his Lordship to invite the Inquisition here. He would not—for love of you. And not one here seems worthy of his love. Father D'Aussigny's Court may still be sound advice. For look you, there's a witch among you, yet none will

help seize her. I must assume there are other witches and heretics among you whose existence you do not even admit! Do you not know, has no one told you, that the mere act of withholding information concerning the enemies of God is itself a heresy? It is! For to pity the heretic is to pity Satan and arraign God. On this ground, a great Pope threatened even the Emperor Frederic—and I see no emperors among you. The witch, the sorcerer is a heretic. Pope John of Avignon flayed alive one of his Bishops on suspicion of sorcery—and I see no one here as influential as a Bishop. Have you any idea how the Inquisition would meet your stubbornness, should my Lord summon it? I am astounded by your comfortable ignorance. Oh, use your heads, good people! Save yourselves torture and damnation! Accuse! Accuse all suspects! *[As he begins moving among them, they shrink away.]* Be they neighbor, parent, child, wife, husband—which is your husband? *[He marks the man with a scowl.]* No relation stands above your relation to God. Nor be afraid you may accuse wrongly. *[He holds up a long needle to their view.]* You know what this is? Your guarantor of guilt or innocence. For whoever bleeds with it, goes free. But if he does not bleed, he is the Devil's own and stands in your way to heaven and you fail to denounce him. Come, we don't have to begin big. Whose cow has gone unnaturally dry? Have you a child once stricken by the evil eye? Did your wife abort? Surely some of you have been taken with mysterious falls and maladies. Who has seen the black cats of hell sneaking into a home? Or overheard strange and unintelligible gibberish made to an unseen companion? This is in your own defense. Will no one say? I have it in these fingers there are witches and demons in this very hall with us. How will you escape your refusal to denounce them?

He has several times passed Caphards. Now, stopping behind him, he tugs down his hood. Then, looks triumphantly at the Baron.

BARON. What! Is it you, Caphards? You dare appear after slaying my Provost?

CAPHARDS. My conscience is clear, my Lord. Except that unarmed as I was and believing the boy with me, I ran off. I had less to do with it than you.

BARON *[rising, shocked]* You denounce me?

CAPHARDS. The bride was assaulted under your roof and under your protection on her wedding night.

BARON. This is not the matter for the day!

ANDREE *[having entered earlier and remained at the entrance, unseen, now speaks with demoniac spirit, her voice unrecognizably deep and resonant]* It is the matter of the day, my Lord! For if you are our protector, who is there to protect any of us against you? This very assembly is made to injure us.

Her appearance, her voice, her bold accusation are sensational in their effect. All are aware that this is not the child of a day ago, but an austere, formidable personality,

become astonishingly mature, fierce and direct. Those closest make way in awe of her as she comes forward to confront the Baron.

BARON. I did not do this to you, my girl. I didn't even know it was happening.

ANDREE. You did it to me. You reviled me for my innocence before your men, made me as a harlot to them, dared them to prove you right.

BARON [*shocked at this interpretation*] Did I do so? But it was not your innocence that I attacked; nor properly to you that I addressed myself—as I thought all knew—but to an anguish within me. I scarcely saw you at the moment: and my madness elsewhere centered. Did I not instruct the men to bargain for you?

ANDREE. You abandoned me to them. They did your will! Before all, I accuse you of stealing my wedding supper, as you yourself declared! I accuse you of being your men, raping on my body! I accuse you of murdering my bridegroom before he could husband me!

The Needler moves to the Baron for a whispered conference.

F. CRION [*fearful for her, hurries to her*] My daughter. Oh, be temperate, my child! Pray to Our Lady of Heaven.

ANDREE. She won't hear me, Father. I see her in church. She is a noblewoman, a queen dressed in furs and jewels.

F. CRION. Andree, speak not so. Fear hell!

ANDREE. After my wedding night, Father, can hell be other than a refuge?

F. CRION. I'll pray for you.

F. Crion offers a silent prayer for her. The Baron sits again. Signing Martin to accompany him, the Needler confronts Andree. Martin stands behind her.

NEEDLER. How has your voice changed so? It was but small and piping the other night.

ANDREE. Not so piping, but that you had trouble shutting it out of your ears when I called to you for help.

NEEDLER. It has a hellish, brazen bell in it. Are you a witch?

ANDREE. Have I lied in my accusations?

NEEDLER. But are you a witch?

ANDREE. What has the truth to do with whether I am a witch?

NEEDLER. But are you a witch? Whose tongue speaks in you?

ANDREE. The tongue of my slain bridegroom speaks in me.

NEEDLER. Answer me this: are you a witch? Who are your accomplices?

ANDREE. The Lord and his Lady, there, are my accomplices. Father Crion, he is my accomplice, for that he did not defend the vows he put in my mouth in God's hearing.

NEEDLER. For the last time, I ask: are you a witch? *He points the needle upward at her.*

ANDREE [*Fearful of it, presses her palm against his wrist, yet answers with spirit.*] And I ask: are you a sorcerer that

you can find out my soul with a needle? I think you are a demon. And if the needle have power, I should be testing you.

They stand so a long moment. A movement of some of the people toward Andree worries the examiner. Suddenly, they have stripped her shoulders bare. Martin grips her wrists behind her back.

NEEDLER [*at the common gasp of resentment*] She has challenged God! It is required!

All stare at her as she shivers with shame and apprehension. The Needler moves around her, examining her body.

F. CRION [*thoroughly outraged*] My Lord! Cry no!

NEEDLER. It is required. I am searching for warts, the Devil's teats, Father. And for the burns of moles where he has kissed her flesh. Or do you think St. Thomas Aquinas was wrong when he proved the existence of devils?

With a yank, he has her clothing down further.

F. CRION. In Christ's name, my Lord, order them to quit this lewdity!

NEEDLER. In Christ's name, I have done this to hundreds of suspects! I didn't create the Devil, Father Crion! Nor the Inquisition! Nor torture, which in defense of God was made holy by the Bull of Innocent 4th. I am only Christ's servant.

BARON. Proceed.

NEEDLER. Here! Here in her cleft, look! a mole! A mole more black than brown, a sure sign of the singeing mouth of Satan. Hold, girl. We'll see if you bleed.

F. CRION [*wringing his hands*] My Lord, my Lord, my Lord. What are we doing here? I shan't stand by to witness this damnable act.

CAPHARDS [*places a hand on his arm*] Father, do you think it will not happen if you run away?

F. CRION. I'll not bear it. No, I can't. Let me go off. *He goes out, right.*

Suddenly, Andree fights clear, a madwoman, wild with fury, dangerous.

ANDREE. Do this in God's name, and I am a witch! I am the Devil's Bride! Beware! Fend! Fend from me, stand away! I have the pox in this fist and a mad-dog death in this! I'll destroy you! I can do it! For last night, I lay with Satan himself! Till the cock sang, I was his rut for power to destroy you in this castle! He promised me this! You will all perish of hell-fire! And you, my Lord. And you, my Lady! And these wild boars of men will wither and burn and perish with my spells! Out of my fingers, bats! Out of me toads, demons of hell! [*She looses them from straining fingers.*] Fly out! Bite, nip, suck! Hide in their hair, their clothes! Never leave them! [*picking one off her arm*] Ah, little one, little fangs and tail, fly! [*snaps him toward the Baron*] Light on the Baron's head! Light on him! I charge you as your master's Bride, sink

into him, stay with him night and day, never leave him! Oh, good little demon, take hold!

She has leaped to the bench of the long table while directing the hellish creatures. It is an hysterical attempt to frighten her enemies with her madness, to destroy them with incantations. All shrink from the mites she has loosed in the air. The Needler and Martin have retired behind their small table, as uneasy and glib as any, for all their gratification at having achieved their purpose. But it is the Baron who is most upset. He fears the devilish creature flying about his head or sitting on it. His Lady, from staring at the girl in a mixture of awe and admiration, now moves a little from him and stares above his head as if following flight. Everyone's attention finally focuses on the Baron's head. He cannot keep his hand from creeping up and searching over his hair.

BARON [to Helaine] You see it? *[Her answer is a contemptuous glance, then she returns her eyes to the air above him. Baron, to the Needler]* Do you see it?

NEEDLER. I am not certain, my Lord.

BARON. But you have the power to see it!

NEEDLER. Aye, my Lord. But—as in darkness—my eyes need to become accustomed to it.

BARON. Take this damned thing off me, Witch! Take it off!

ANDREE *[her fingers still emanating mysteries]* I couldn't if I wished. He likes you too well. Don't you, little fangs and tails? Oh, how you dance!

BARON *[Does not know how to behave with dignity in this circumstance, but manages to keep his hand down.]* I feel hot—and prickly. I don't like this thing. *[to Helaine]* What does it look like? *[She will not answer.]* Bind her hands, someone! Jehan!

ANDREE *[as Jehan fearfully approaches her]* Stand away! There is an imp on your shoulder! *[Jehan slaps at it.]* The other one, stupid! *[He vainly slaps the other shoulder.]* He's jumped to your cheek! *[He slaps his cheeks.]* Stay with him, little one, till he croaks!

BARON. Claude! *[The Men bind Andree's hands behind her, then stand away, feeling their bodies queasily, looking up at the air about them with resentful eyes.]*

ANDREE *[Laughing at them. To the serfs]* He has tied my hands—as if the Devil needed hands! *[Now, she sees their fright of her.]* What? Are you frightened of me? But I'm only a witch. Be frightened of them: my Lord and Lady and of these wolf-hounds. I am a witch because my Colas was murdered. And so must you all be witches and sorcerers. I charge them with being witches, my Lord, for that you murder them day by day.

CAPHARDS *[going to her]* Andree! Child!

ANDREE. Sorcerer! Confess yourself! Have not your home and sword been taken from you?

CAPHARDS. Andree, and you love us, recant or we shall all suffer for it.

ANDREE. I declare you all children of hell—or you're

not worth saving. You, Pierre, how often have I seen the Devil rise in you at thought of your wrongs? Confess it. Widow Bolin, surely you are a witch. Did not my Lord's men forcibly bivouac on your body some weeks ago? Come! Open your mouths! Loose your confessions, you witches and sorcerers! I know you every one! Oh, the dreadful little darling! Look at your head, my Lord!

Suddenly, Paley's Woman screams.

PALEY'S WOMAN. It bit me! It bit me here! It's flying around me! *[Ducking and dodging, she falls on her knees.]* Oh, dear Mother in Heaven, you know I took it only because he was dying. I was mad with fear. But I didn't sell my soul! You know I didn't, Mother. *[She crawls a few steps toward the Needler.]* The Witch will tell you that I'll bring you to her. She'll have to tell you so because it's the truth! *[Needler signs Martin to write.]* Oh, holy Mother in Heaven, have mercy on my soul. *[to Baron]* Don't take me from him! He'll die if you do and that'll be an even greater sin.

WIDOW BOLIN *[kneels and places an arm about her]* Of course, it was only to save the boy. You did what any mother would do. You are no more witch than I, for all that poor one's blabbering.

PALEY'S WOMAN. He'll die if they take me off.

NEEDLER. We'll not take you and you discover the Witch to us.

PALEY'S WOMAN. I'll do it. Oh, I will, my Lord.

Simon, a little man of about 35, has been staring at the Widow from her entrance with unwavering fascination, while his wife, Millicent, has vainly tried to draw him away. The Widow has shown awareness of the pantomime only by amused contempt.

SIMON. Widow Bolin is a witch! I testify to it. And my wife will testify to it. She puts hot embers in my bowels! She comes to me in the night when I am asleep and helpless—and my Millicent beside me—and I cry and I beg her not to—but she covers me like a vampire—and sucks and sucks till I faint with the horrible sweetness. You're a witch, Widow Bolin. Look, look everyone, her marks, her teeth on me! Do you see them? *[He displays his throat.]* She's a witch! She must be burned. I want her burned!

MILLICENT. Oh, it's true, my Lords. He wakes in the night—all in a horrible sweat, gripping his throat with his nails and crying pitifully. *[She springs at the Widow but is held.]* You foul, filthy devil's dam! I'll scratch out your eyes! Witch!

W. BOLIN. Your Simon's been wanting to lie with me ever since Bolin died. I can't help his pitiful dreams—if you can't.

MILLICENT *[like an animal, spitting and with open claws]* Witch! Foul, damned witch!

SIMON *[weeping weakly]* She comes every night. She won't let me be. I can't live till she's burned. She must be burned.

NEEDLER [*to Jehan*] Place the Widow there. [*to the Baron*] You see, my Lord, how once the boil is pierced, the venom bursts forth?

ANDREE. Your best people, my Lord. Only the fools will be left you. That is my witchery on you.

BARON [*to the Needler*] That widow is worth six of the nickering ass who accuses her.

NEEDLER. I have yet to test her and all the accused. But if they don't bleed, they cannot prosper you, my Lord.

ANDREE. What should we bleed with? Where is Colas' blood—and where is mine? There's not a cup of it left among any here for the castle's drinking it. Confess and burn, oh, dear ones.

CAPHARDS. Andree, and you love Colas, desist. It is what this Needler wishes of you.

NEEDLER. Can't this man be silenced, my Lord?

BENT OLD MAN [*He has been surreptitiously quarreling with the Young Man. Now, as the Young Man shoves him off, he seizes him.*] You did do this to me, you did! My old woman died of hunger because you paralyzed my arm.

ANDREE. Another!

YOUNG MAN. You still eat with it, don't you? Let go of me, you old fool.

OLD MAN. My Lord, he has the evil eye. He walked on my strips backwards and then this arm—it happened to me.

YOUNG MAN. I was not fourteen, my Lord, and was only putting him in a temper. Let go!

OLD MAN. He has the evil eye.

NEEDLER [*to Jehan*] Place him with the others. He is accused.

YOUNG MAN [*at bay*] If it's come to the evil eye, who made my poor pig to die? Such a promising little fellow and then someone here looked at him with an evil heart. Who did this to me?

He is placed with the accused.

CAPHARDS [*leaping to the dais*] Let there be no more charges against anyone. Why do you let yourselves be pushed into fighting your neighbor? Your enemies are elsewhere. There will be burnings and hangings and great grief and loss to everyone, but the evil that feeds on us will remain to feed—and none left with the will or strength to stand to it. It's not yet too late. Recant your charges and confessions! Recant!

ANDREE. Recant not a word. We are not of the same flesh as they. Between the castle and the heath, as between heaven and hell, it must be war!

BARON [*leaping up*] This I will do: I will have these two quiet! Bind and gag them for me!

ANDREE [*While Caphards is being tied, she moves down to the Baron, facing him demonically.*] My Lord, I wonder you do not feel that fangy little imp dancing on your head? His tail is boring your skull like a little woodpecker! Pick, pick, pick! In time, it will touch your brain.

BARON [*unable to stand much more of this*] I do feel something. My scalp, my skin all over, prickles and is

hateful. [*Feels with his hand. To Helaine*] What is it? You must tell me! Needler, you see it or you're a fraud!

NEEDLER. My Lord, don't touch it! I see it plain, now. Oh, the evil slimy thing! All fangs and claws and tail and devilish ferocity. Touch not your hair lest you break him from his tail which is already partly in your skull. Bow down your head, my Lord. I will exorcise him. [*The Baron bows his head and the Needler makes rapid crosses over it.*] Out, demon, fly! God's cross hurl you into hell! It's gone, my Lord.

BARON. Gone? Truly gone? I feel a scorching here—

ANDREE [*laughing*] But there! It's back again! Drill, little one, dig in!

NEEDLER. Nay, it's gone.

ANDREE. Would you tell a witch where the devil is?

BARON [*in rage and terror*] I'll have no more of this hellish affair! Keep only this girl and Caphards. But for the rest, clear the hall! Out, out, you fools! Out! [*The Needler speaks hastily to Martin who promptly clears out with the rest. The people are only too happy to flee the hall. The Baron, referring to the prisoners*] Chain them below! And for this devil's vixen, double weight! She must not escape. [*The Soldiers take Caphards off. But the Baron seizes Andree by the shoulders.*] I did not wish you harmed when you stood here with your Colas. If I attacked your innocence, it was because innocence was lost to me. If I spoke hatefully to the boy, it was because he was richer than I in love and constancy.

ANDREE [*suddenly weary*] Can you bring him back to life, my Lord? [*He releases her and Jehan takes her away.*]

BARON [*feeling his head*] I'll always imagine it's there. How will I know it's gone? [*to Helaine*] You brought me to this. Yet you saw this imp from the first and did nothing.

HELAINÉ. If I am helpless with you, my Lord, what shall I avail against the Devil?

BARON. Is it still sitting on me?

NEEDLER. I told you, it's gone, my Lord.

BARON. I did not ask you!

HELAINÉ [*running a smoothing hand over her hair*] I don't see it—just now. But who can tell where it may be hiding on you, to return to your head in some unsuspected time. Only she can know it, the little witch: and only she can free you surely. But I judge, she is in no mood to be lenient with you.

BARON. I'll go whip her into it at once!

HELAINÉ. Would that do it, my Lord? She faces the stake. What fear can she have of a whipping? But—perhaps . . . well, perhaps not . . .

BARON. Perhaps, perhaps not what?

HELAINÉ. No, it's probably too much to hope.

BARON. Will you ever say your say!

HELAINÉ. She is still young—though Satan's kind are all as old as he. Still, there's just a chance, if you would let me go to her, I could beseech her mercy, as one woman

to another—and perhaps there will be enough of the human in her heart to be touched by pity—and she will call off her devil.

BARON. Go to her at once! It's good!

HELAINE. She may refuse me.

BARON. Go to her! Speak for me.

HELAINE. I'll do this for you, my Lord, though I have not forgotten that your hands will never touch me. I'll do this for you. [*She goes, an enigmatic irony in her promise.*]

NEEDLER. Go with her, my Lord. If you can overhear her, do so to your interest.

BARON [*turning on him, furiously*]. Bungler! A fine spectacle you made of me! I shall not soon recover from it. You take your fellow and be out of my fief as quickly as you can go. . . . Where is he?

NEEDLER. I don't see him. What shall we do about the heretics, my Lord?

BARON. The two I am holding are all that I shall do anything about. Have I serfs to burn? I need more hands on my land, not less.

NEEDLER. But what of the other heretics, my Lord?

BARON. There are no others. This was not the Inquisition. This was my own court, instituted by me—for only one purpose; to frighten the rebelliousness out of my vilians. This we did. Let no more be said about it.

NEEDLER. There is one other, under this roof, my Lord, concerning whom I wonder. And her I would have you follow at once to overhear what she may have to say to the other.

BARON [*enraged, hand to dagger*]. You dog! What is my Lady to you that you dare speak of her so?

NEEDLER. Only fear for your welfare prompts me to it, my Lord. Did you not think it queer that she saw the imp even before me? I have had a long experience in it. Whence came her power? And why did she not rid you of the demon and yet was in such haste to join the Devil's Bride? Is it possible she has more in common with her than with you, my Lord?

BARON [*catching himself considering this, also*]. Find your fellow! Be gone before I find your heart. Let me not see you after sundown. [*He goes*]

The Needler stares after him a long moment, then follows him with a sardonic smile.

Curtain.

ACT II

Scene 2

SCENE: *A lightless, rough-hewed cell in the dungeon, the door at the right. The cell left of it is partially seen. Set above eye-level in the common wall between cells is a narrow slot covered by a sliding panel.*

Bearing a torch, Jehan unlocks the cell door and motions Andree to precede him. He sets the torch in a wall socket and manacles her in a kneeling position

to the common wall. She appears suddenly used up and, but for being chained, would fall forward.

ANDREE [*She is again scarcely more than the little girl who married Colas. Murmuring, mouth parched*]. Please, water, please.

JEHAN. Witch! Make water. The Devil will help you drink it.

ANDREE. Oh, what harm I have done today. There must be evil in me. But, I'm not a witch.

JEHAN. Nor is the Devil the Devil.

He takes the torch and goes. As he is turning the key, Helaine enters bearing a cup of wine and a smaller light than his.

HELAINE. Open. [*He hesitates, but her imperiousness compels him to obey. She exchanges her light for his.*] Remain outside. I'll knock when I'm ready to leave. [*She enters the cell. Still unsure of himself, Jehan locks her in. After a moment's consideration, he goes into the adjoining cell and stealthily slides open the intervening panel. Helaine stands looking at the girl.*] My little one. [*She fixes the light in the socket. She holds the cup for Andree. But Andree chokes on the unaccustomed wine and turns away her head.*] It's only a little wine. Drink it. It's good for you. [*But Andree wants no more of it. Helaine sets the cup down and begins striding about like a caged cat. Then stopping before Andree*]. Almighty God, you were magnificent! Magnificent, my little witch. How he trembled! He trembled before your fury. [*She resumes her pacing.*] Oh, for such power! . . . He will not love me ever. . . . Tell me, little witch, what must I do to become like you? But in secret, a secret witch with a secret power to make him love me again—as if I were the young Helaine that first night he brought me home—and not what I should then become? You must tell me how I'm to go about it, what I am to do, little witch. . . . Tell me. . . . Well! Will you not say?

ANDREE. I'm not a witch, my Lady. I am only a poor mad thing. Christ forgive me, what have I done?

HELAINE [*enraged*]. You cannot fool me by calling on Christ. You're a witch! I saw you for a witch. You will say what you know or I'll compel you to it.

The Baron enters the adjoining cell. Jehan stands aside for him, and he listens in the semi-darkness. Soon after, the Needler comes in, stopping outside the skirt of light. The Baron, preoccupied and scarcely aware of him, motions him to depart, but the Needler remains. Caught by what he hears, the Baron gives himself entirely to it. Suddenly, Helaine falls on her knees to Andree.

HELAINE. Oh. I don't want to be angry with you, little witch. Here, I brought you wine. Have a little more of it. It'll strengthen you. [*Andree refuses the cup. Naive and simple, she is repelled by Helaine's desire for evil.*] You'll have it later. Or, if you prefer, I'll return with water and with bread, too. Those swine won't feed you. You are not precious to them as you are to me.

[*She wipes Andree's face feverishly without tenderness.*] How amazing! Only yesterday, so helpless—what a little girl. And today! You must think of me as yourself. I am like you: a wife without a husband to lie with in the night. You'd want your man if he were alive, wouldn't you? Is there not a great emptiness here, here in your middle, as though your insides had been stolen, sneaked out of you in your sleep—a hollowness—a fearful, gnawing wanting? It must be filled! It needs filling! I am only a madness without it. Good girl, good little witch, good my precious, be good to me. Tell me what I must do that he burn for me as I for him.

ANDREE [*she can only shrink from her*] I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know such things. I am not a witch.

HELAINÉ [*seizes her head*] You will say or I'll snatch out those eyes that stare at me as if into hell itself. [*Her hold is suddenly gentle.*] Oh, but I . . . Forgive me. I mustn't be angry or I shall frighten you. Would you like these trinkets? They shall be yours! These jewels. . . [*stripping her rings, her necklace, her earrings*] these earrings. Saladin gave them to my grandfather in Jerusalem. Take them. Take everything! [*Only as she holds the trinkets out to Andree does she recall her dire situation.*] But, of course! You must first be freed. I'll free you myself. I'll come tonight, secretly. I'll unlock you. They'll not torture you, my precious one. But here, let me put them here—they are yours. How they will make you shine, with your small, strange face. [*She rolls the jewels into Andree's waist.*] Now! Begin at the beginning. How came you to him? How summoned him?

ANDREE. Whom? I cannot think. I don't know.

HELAINÉ [*trying to control herself*] Satan! Say, by what means you summoned him. [*She shakes Andree.*]

ANDREE. Truly, truly I don't know if what happened to me happened or was in a dream.

HELAINÉ. But his power is in you. You made the demon dance on my Lord's head. Spell him for me that he lust for me again. Or get me with Satan for magic of my own to make him burn. You can do this. This I know.

ANDREE. I haven't this thing you want of me, my Lady. If I came to Satan—and I pray bitterly it was not—it was not for my body's lusting, for of such things I do not know, such lust is not in me—but for lust of vengeance to strike back. And this craze, continued and unsatisfied, was what made you think I have power—and made me believe it in the hall. But, now, I am here, chained and alone and utterly despairing—and I know there is no power of evil in me whatever harm I did to my innocent neighbors, Christ forgive me. I am no witch. I am only a miserable widow.

HELAINÉ [*springs up in rage*] I don't believe you. You're a witch, I know you for a witch. I am your chatelaine! I'll have you torn by horses, I'll have your nails drawn one by one and you do not speak for me! Call on your Master! Call on Satan! I command you! I

feel he is with us. I feel him in me! Out, Satan! Reveal yourself! I give myself to you! Show me a sign. . . Oh, foul witch that you will not help! [*Exhausted and sobbing with frustration, she snatches her jewels back from Andree.*] You shan't have them. I'll leave you here to be burned alive. I'll have you flayed. I'll do it, with my own nails I'll do it. I'll devise tortures unheard of. For the last time: will you call upon the Devil for me?

ANDREE. I think he is in you, my Lady.

HELAINÉ [*runs to beat upon the door*] Open! Open! Guard! [*Jehan moves, but the Baron signs him to stop and sharply snaps the panel shut. Helaine hears it, then sees it, and realizing that she has been overheard, perhaps already abandoned, seizes the torch and madly beats it against the wall. It is extinguished and the cell is closed in darkness.*] Open! Open! My Lord! Remy!

BARON [*to Jehan*] Go above. Say nothing of this. Don't come near the cell. [*All fear and sweat, Jehan goes quickly. The Baron is uncertain in his reaction to what he has heard. He looks at the Needler, but his concentration is so much on himself, that though the Needler steps into the light with an ironic smile for him, he turns away without sufficient awareness that he is in company. To himself*] She's touched. I was too harsh with her. My pride, this sick, uncomfortable agitation of self-esteem. It is for love of me she is distraught. Helaine! Oh, Helaine! How wild and dangerous for wanting me! And I? Am I not as confused and one distraught for love of her? How have I lived these days of my return? . . . I must think more about her . . . be clear . . . to myself, be honest. . . But she wronged me so! I am wounded for life. And yet, how could it have been otherwise? Such is the woman in her. But such a woman! To famish for me—even to Satan and eternal hell! I'll do it! I'll go and claim her mine.

He starts out, unmindful of the Needler.

NEEDLER. It is too late, my Lord. The Devil has first claim on her.

BARON. What! Do you dare me in my own castle? . . . It was from love of me.

NEEDLER. For love of the Devil, my Lord. She belongs to the Inquisition.

BARON. I am the Inquisition here!

NEEDLER. Not so. The Inquisition is the Black Friar, the Dominican defender of the Church.

BARON [*seizing him, dagger out*] I'll silence you.

NEEDLER. It is too late, my Lord. Kill me and you compound the crime. You noticed that my fellow, as you called him, is gone. I sent him galloping for Father D'Aussigny. The Inquisition will be here the day after tomorrow. [*Confounded, the Baron releases him. The Needler goes.*]

BARON [*recovering only after the man is gone, cries after him*] Traitor! Turncoat! Judas! How am I caught in this?

Curtain.

ACT II

Scene 3

SCENE: Noon, two days later. The hall. It is set as it was in the previous court session except that the dais and chairs are upstage left of the court table and face front. On another dais, slightly left of the castellan's chairs, is the dais and elaborately canopied chair reserved for Father D'Aussigny. There is a footstool beside it.

Fully assembled, the silent people huddle at the right, dreading the proceeding and fearful of one another. Jehan is not present, but soldiers Claude and Robin are standing right of the group, while two other soldiers are upstage, far left.

F. Crion, back to us, is kneeling in fervent prayer center of the long bench.

The Needler and Martin are downstage left, their heads close together.

NEEDLER [to one of the soldiers] You may inform the Baron we are ready. [The soldier goes. To Martin] Bring them in. [Martin goes to extreme left and beckons. Jehan escorts in Caphards, Andree, and the Witch. The Needler signs him to place them upstage and right at the court table. The Soldier returns and whispers his message to the Needler, who turns to Martin, with mock sympathy] He waits on his Lady. She is not well.

MARTIN [eagerly] Shall I knock at F. D'Aussigny's door?

NEEDLER [restraining him] I'll see him in myself.

He goes. The assemblage strains after him and bears his knock like a blow on its heart. The Needler returns, stops at the entrance, stares at the people with vindictive promise, then reverently bows his head. F. D'Aussigny enters. The people bow their heads.

F. D'A. Am I summoned too soon? Where are my hosts?

NEEDLER. I am told they will join us later, my Lord Bishop.

F. D'A. How, later?

[The Needler whispers the answer to him, watching if it will be proper to smirk. Non-committantly] I am sorry to hear it. [The Needler decides a long face is in order. Almost fawning, he bows the Inquisitor to his chair, picking up the footstool and holding it in readiness. The Inquisitor remains standing, playing with the heavy cross on his chest and gazing down at the heads bowed to him. Then, inclining the cross over them] Christ's blessing on us all. [He sits and the Needler adjusts the footstool for him.] Let us begin. [The Needler whispers a question into his ear.] No, no. Let the accused who have already been heard be placed for Boulogne and go on with the others.

MARTIN [at a sign from the Needler, reading] Richard.

Will the accused known as Richard step forward. Also the Widow Bolin.

Dumbfounded and unbelieving, the Widow and the Young Man of the previous scene step out of the crowd.

NEEDLER [to Jehan] Put them there.

RICHARD [under Jehan's escort] But I was only a lad of fourteen, my Lord. It was eight years ago, eight years, my Lord.

F. D'A. Fully eight years ago?

RICHARD. Yes, my Lord.

NEEDLER. My Lord Bishop, he has been heard.

F. D'A. Yet eight is a long time.

RICHARD [hopefully] It is, my Lord.

F. D'A. But you know, God would not let Satan plead his youth when he was 5000 years younger.

RICHARD [as he is placed with the prisoners] Oh, my crops, my wheat, my Lord. What is to happen?

W. BOLIN [kneeling before the Inquisitor] My Lord, my children. What will become of my young ones and I taken? Have pity.

F. D'A. Should you not have thought of them earlier, my daughter?

W. BOLIN. But I am innocent, my Lord.

F. D'A. Then what have you to fear? You will receive fair trial.

W. BOLIN. My children, my Lord. My Mignonette is scarce three, my oldest nine.

NEEDLER. She is accused for a vampire, my Lord.

W. BOLIN. What proof can the man give of it?

NEEDLER. The marks of your teeth on his throat.

W. BOLIN. Those are the marks of his fingernails with which he is constantly gripping his throat—as, look, he is doing this very moment. But what proof has he of me?

NEEDLER. He needs none. It is enough that he accuses you.

W. BOLIN. My Lord.

F. D'A. The burden of proof that you are innocent, rests with you, my daughter.

W. BOLIN [frightened] But it is in his sleep. How can I do this?

F. D'A. If you are innocent, God will help you prove it.

W. BOLIN. But if He should not—for what am I after all?—and you condemn me innocent to the stake?

F. D'A. The Inquisition has never condemned an innocent. None of us is innocent, my child. We are born with sin.

W. BOLIN. But that is not the accusation!

F. D'A. Have no fear. We will hear you at the trial. [Jehan places her with the prisoners.]

W. BOLIN. My children! Oh, my children! What will become of them?

A whispering agitation of pity moves the people.

F. D'A. What? Do I sense an aura of fear and rejection among you? But the Inquisition is God's greatest mercy. It is His extreme instrument of purification and

forgiveness of heresy. As one of its judges, I am here for pity of your souls, for very love of you. Nor is this yet the Court. We are a preliminary hearing prepared only to air accusations and confessions. The accused will then be conducted to Boulogne for a later trial. But here let me caution you, as you prize your hope of heaven, no tie of kin will excuse silence concerning heretics and witches, for to pity Satan is to condemn God. Should you be found out in your silence, you will perforce be adjudged a heretic yourself. If we fail to find you out, God will find you out more surely and your soul will burn in hell forever. But I know you will not withhold information. I see it in your faces. [*to the Needler*] Proceed.

MARTIN. Pierre. The man known as Pierre.

PIERRE [*stepping out, genuinely surprised*] Was I accused? I hadn't heard it. Nor have I been heard.

NEEDLER. The witch Andree accused you before all of harboring the Devil in you. Do you confess it?

ANDREE [*as Jehan goes for him*] Did I do so? No, no, I withdraw it.

F. D'A [*to Pierre*] Do you confess it?

PIERRE. I confess myself, serf, my Lord. My crime is poverty.

F. D'A. I see you are a philosopher. But poverty is no crime. That is a statement of heresy in itself. For did not Christ say, the poor ye shall always have with you? The crime, my son, is rebellion against one's natural state, for it is written: As it was, so shall it always be.

PIERRE. You are indeed the better philosopher, my Lord Bishop, for you sit high up there and I stand here.

Jehan places him beside Richard.

MARTIN. She who is known as the witch of the heath.

The Witch steps forward.

NEEDLER. All here know you as the Witch of the heath. Do you confess it?

THE WITCH. Some know me as Mother—even the poor soul who led you to me. I am physician to the poor.

PALEY'S WOMAN [*hiding her face*] Holy Mother Mary forgive me this. But the boy lives.

F. D'A. I am told you conduct the Black Mass.

THE WITCH. I am Satan's priest as you are God's, my Lord Bishop.

F. D'A. Look about and point out those who have taken Satan's communion with you.

THE WITCH. My master does not require me to betray even my kin.

F. D'A. Put her with the others. We have ways of learning what we wish. [*as she is being placed with the prisoners*] The Devil has certainly placed his sign on you. I have seldom seen one so ugly of face.

THE WITCH. The crime of my ugliness belongs not to the Devil; but to the old Baron's soldiers, all of whom are now safely with God in heaven.

F. D'A [*Ruffled. Addressing all*] There seems to be a wonder of argument and contentious wit here. I want

questions answered as becomes your station: directly and without speeches. Whom do we have now?

MARTIN. Caphards, once vassal and Mayor. Step out here. [*Caphards steps forward.*]

NEEDLER. Caphards, I do myself accuse you of heresy. I accuse you of contempt for the Office of the Inquisition, of declaring it less just and merciful than the lay court assembled by the Baron. I accuse you of repeated attempts to block the accusations and confessions of others in regard to heresy. Finally, I accuse you of fomenting un-Godly rebelliousness against ordained authority. Do you confess to the truth of these accusations?

CAPHARDS [*addressing himself to F. D'A*] If you please, my Lord, I should like to tell you something of how all this happened.

F. D'A. We will tolerate no speeches. You are asked a simple question: Do you confess to the truth of the accusations?

CAPHARDS. But my Lord, it would serve your own understanding—

F. D'A. Answer the question directly. Why should this be so difficult? Are you or are you not guilty of the charges?

CAPHARDS. My Lord, I have all my life striven to be an honest Christian. I think all here respect me. Will you not hear me out a moment?

F. D'A. I will hear you: yes or no! Which is it?

CAPHARDS. I cannot give it so simply.

F. D'A. Then, we will have to get the answer in Boulogne.

Caphards is set beside Pierre.

MARTIN. The witch known as Andree.

Andree steps forward. She is meek and defeated.

NEEDLER. This woman, my Lord Bishop, is self-confessed that she is a witch, that she has lain with Satan and bartered her soul to him for his power of evil. In the course of her confession, she called on Satan many times and filled this hall with his dreadful creatures that coursed through the air, biting and frightening everyone. A demon lit on the head of the Baron and danced there for all to behold.

F. D'A. Is this true, my daughter?

ANDREE. I can't say. Some of it is true and some is not—and which is which, I cannot think, my Lord. I was maddened with grief and injuries. I have these last days been able to do nothing but weep and bitterly repent it all.

CAPHARDS. My Lord, I couldn't speak for myself. Might I speak for the girl?

F. D'A. You may speak against her, if you like.

CAPHARDS. But I wish to speak in her defense, my Lord.

F. D'A. What good would that do her, the word of a heretic?

F. CRION. My Lord Bishop.

F. D'A. Ah! Father Crion.

F. CRION. If you will permit me, Father, some explanation of this affair is necessary.

The Needler looks anxiously to F. D'A for a clue of behaviour.

F. D'A. But this is not a trial.

F. CRION. My Lord, you are willing to listen even to heretics so long as they testify against the accused. Will you not listen to me? I have grown grey in Christ's service—and here in this fief, among these very people. They are my charges, my Lord.

F. D'A. Do I understand you wish to speak for this woman?

NEEDLER. My Lord, she has freely avowed her relation to the Devil. Is a priest to speak in her defense?

F. CRION. Not in defense of her heresy, my Lord, for I abominate Satan and his works with all the terror of my heart. Nor do I wish to speak for whatever evil is in these others. I wish only to speak for the good in them, my Lord—I am their confessor—and to indicate where the greater evil abides. I beg you, let me do this, my Lord Bishop.

NEEDLER. But she is self-confessed—

F. D'A [*his hand silencing him*]. Do speak, Father Crion. We are much interested in what you may have to contribute here.

F. CRION. Thank you, Father. [*He looks about, trying to collect himself; and, finally, as a way of doing so, reaches for Andree's hand. She snatches it behind her. He is shocked.*] My daughter!

ANDREE. I am not your daughter. Twice you abandoned me.

F. CRION. Thrice Peter denied knowing Christ, yet, finally, he knew Christ and Christ was his Lord. [*He is quite shocked.*] Did you see how she turned from me, my Lord Bishop? I have known her all her life. I am her priest. And yet, here, she snatches away from me in a sort of horror. Don't you think it strange, my Lord? Why should she do this?

F. D'A. She is a witch.

F. CRION. She is a witch, my Lord, because I abandoned her to be a witch. That's why she turns from me.

F. D'A. I become more anxious to hear you every moment. In what manner did you abandon her since you did your entire office by her?

F. CRION. When direst evil beset her, I looked the other way—as Holy Mother Church has looked the other way these hundreds of years. Thus I abandoned her. I married this girl five days ago. The right of the first night is a mortal sin, my Lord. We know this. And yet I looked the other way—as though if I did not see the sin with my own eyes, it would not happen. But it did happen. And because I looked away, she was viciously assaulted and raped by the Baron's men, and her youthful husband, a good, Christian lad, my Lord, was slain by them. Is it any wonder, then, that she should have fled to the Devil, instead of coming to me? I think we must ask ourselves,

my Lord, did she abandon the Church, or was the Church first to abandon her?

F. D'A. Do you accuse the Church of creating witches and heretics?

F. CRION. No, my Lord. Not directly—not by intention. [*He hesitates, then makes up his mind.*] I must speak clearly—I have not much time left.

F. D'A. Please do.

F. CRION. It seems to me they are made by our default. If it is true that these, my children, whom I so loved and tended, have fallen from my teachings, isn't it because they did not see me on their side, they did not hear my voice raised in just condemnation when their grain was ridden down, their tables looted, their husbands flogged or even murdered, their wives and daughters violated? I wished to protest—God, oh, God! how many times I almost cried out. But I didn't. I swallowed the bitter phlegm in silence—and tried to comfort myself that I was only a poor priest and had not strength enough to cope with the power of the Baron—and that in any case I was not personally culpable: I was more Christian than he. And in the meantime, and little by little, the members of my flock looked less to me—they were divorced from me. For they, at least, were able to recognize that my Christianity could be no whiter more Christian than my tolerance of evil; and that my culpability could, then, be no less than his.

F. D'A. Tell me, then, is it your opinion that all evil is with the nobles and none is with the serf?

F. CRION. My Lord, I am speaking out of the fullness of my heart—as I never dared to do before.

F. D'A. Oh, I am delighted to hear you. Please. Is the serf all good and no evil?

F. CRION. We have been taught that there is evil in every man, my Lord. And this I know to be true, for I have seen most terrible sin even in myself. But I have learned that evil of a wide and devastating order cannot arise from the poor and powerless to envelope the mighty; but falls from the mighty few upon the powerless many. The evil in this community is not in these ragged accused—look at them, where is their power?

While all attention is on the huddle of people on the right, the Baron and his Lady enter, preceded by Giles. They stop in the entrance. Helaine's hair is in a devil's coiffure. She is like a stone, rigid and divorced even from the Baron so solicitously holding her hand.

GILES [*with the Baron's permission*]. Sir Remy and my Lady Helaine.

BARON. If I but stand in your company, Father Crion, St. Peter has already inscribed my name. [*privately to Helaine, chafing her hand*] How cold your hand is. Fear nothing, my love. Perhaps it has not turned out so badly after all. He will take off a few and we shall have our little world as always, clear and amiable to our wish. Come let them see you smile . . . But once . . . smile at them. . . . [*He leads her before F. D'A and kisses his extended hand.*]

But Helaine remains withdrawn.] My Lady is indisposed. But we both welcome you, my Lord Bishop, and hope you had good rest of your journey.

F. D'A. Thank you, my children. I hope it is of no consequence.

BARON. Nothing is of consequence, my Lord, but that we are together again—we are new-made, my Lady and I. I have been thinking I might've welcomed your Court from the first. But had I done so, I might not have found my love again—and all would have been as dust in my mouth.

F. D'A. I am happy for you both, that all is well.

The Baron guides Helaine to her seat and tenderly kisses her hand.

BARON. Smile to me, Helaine. . . . Still in that dreadful dungeon? But is there a gage of tenderness I failed these last two days? Think on this only: we shall have long happiness together when this is past. Rely on it, my love.

F. D'A. As you heard, Sir Remy, Father Crion was expounding for us a most absorbing doctrine.

BARON. Absorbing to me, also, Father Crion.

F. D'A. Do you contend, then, Father, there is good in these heretics, even in this bag of Satan's, or, perhaps, in Satan himself?

F. CRION. I believe God has an answer even to that . . . You shouldn't bait me, Father D'Aussigny. I am saying to you what my entire life knows—and I am an old man near to death. The evil in these is insignificant. The evil in the castle and in such as I for fearing to speak out against its acts may overwhelm us all.

F. D'A. You are weighting the balance, Father Crion.

F. CRION. My Lord Bishop! You saw this child turn from me. Is it possible you cannot or will not sense the awful portent of such rejection for us all?

F. D'A. But I am listening to you most eagerly, Father Crion. The Inquisition has always sought to know what the sons of the Church are thinking. We have heard many priests in our 300 years of existence, and Bishops and Archbishops, and even Princes of the Church. And once we heard a Pope. Satan has many strange disguises.

F. CRION. You do not make me tremble, my Lord. I shall die in Christ whatever you may be planning for me. And I believe, however *you* understand me, He will judge me cleaner than I have been for many years up to this morning. I believe the Church of Christ is the home of man on earth and I would have it so to the end of time. That is why, my Lord, I dare say to the Church, Beware! for those whom we abandon to malevolent power will surely abandon us some day. Let the Kings and Barons and the Church beware, for power that rests its security on cruelty, such as to this poor girl, or on the theft of rights as from this man, or on spies such as this vile Needler, or on the torture and burning of thousands of heretical rebels created by these evils—that power is already lost. Let the Church beware! for as the earthly power which it supports

by alliance corrupts and vanishes, a bit of the Church must vanish with it.

F. D'A. You will accompany us to Boulogne, Father. *[F. Crion joins the prisoners. This time Andree takes his hand. They stand so in a communion of understanding. Now, the Needler portentously places a document in F. D'A's hands. When he has read it, the Inquisitor signs him aside.]* Lady Helaine de Puy-Reguier.

BARON. My Lord Bishop!

Her calling causes a sensation of astonishment and surprise. But outwardly, she in no way responds, remaining rigid. Immobilized for the moment, the Baron stares at the Inquisitor.

F. D'A. Do you hear me, my Lady? This is the Court speaking.

BARON. My Lord Bishop! You said nothing of this when we spoke together.

F. D'A. It is not a private matter, my son.

BARON. But what is it? And why must it be brought up in this manner?

F. D'A. I could wish it were not necessary. But here it is: a written accusation and signed. You see, Father Crion, that whether the poor are as evil as the rich, the rich, at least, are as evil as the poor. I will have to put the usual question to Lady Helaine.

BARON. Who brings the accusation?

F. D'A. That is of no concern to you.

BARON. But my Lord, I was present when this incident occurred. I was its only witness—unless you credit this Needler—and it is his word against mine.

F. D'A. What incident? What word? I have not yet stated the accusation, but you know it already. Is it possible that even you think it was susceptible of this interpretation? *[The Baron is nonplussed.]* My Lady, you are charged with seeking out the witch, Andree, in order to give yourself through her to Satan for the most reprehensibly horrendous purposes: and did finally declare yourself invested by Satan with the words, "I feel him in me!"

BARON *[leaping up]* My Lord Bishop, you can't take this churl's word against mine! I am a nobleman. I declare this document a lie from salutation to signature. There was no other witness but we two. This is my testimony.

F. D'A. There seems to have been another witness, unfortunately. *[The Baron is stunned.]* The witch Andree, my Lord.

BARON. But she is a serf and a heretic and believes herself injured by me. What good is her word here?

F. D'A. Good enough to convict; useless to set free. But, my son, again you anticipate. We have not heard her. We do not know what she will say. What is your testimony, Andree?

ANDREE. She followed me into the cell. She begged me to let Satan come into her.

F. D'A. And did she say of Satan, "I feel him in me"?

ANDREE. My Lord, I had just come from my own woeful

agony. I don't clearly remember. That entire day is night-mared in my head.

BARON. On, honest girl! You heard her, my Lord Bishop. She remembers no such thing. Clearly it is his word against mine. *[to Andree]* Oh, pure and innocent! How gladly would I give up even my hope of Grisart that I had not done you this harm. But truly, my bitterness was not to you—how could it be? But turned in upon myself with a blind destructiveness that somehow took you in. And now you give me good for it. I am bowed down.

F. D'A. Again you anticipate, my Lord. There is yet another whose evidence we must consider—and neither churl nor serf. Lady Helaine, you have heard the charge. Do you confess it it?

BARON *[trying to speak to her confidentially]* For our love, Helaine, speak for us—the truth—as we know it.

HELAINE *[very coldly]* It is too late, my love that was. I am too wearied of the game you brought upon me.

BARON. It shall be as it was. Say nothing hurtful. We will yet be happy together, my own.

HELAINE. I am too tired. And I am no longer what you pleased to call: wild and vivid. I am an old woman inside me. My Lord Inquisitor, I did go to this witch. I did beg for Satan to enter into me. And Satan must have done so—for I feel a nothing in me—I am like the shell of a nut with the kernel burned out of it.

BARON. My Lord, she is half mad with a trouble I brought upon her. Let me retire with her to talk to her more privately that she may recover some sanity with which to meet this charge. Or let me, at least, explain what happened between us.

F. D'A. Do I understand you wish to speak in her defense?

BARON. I am her husband, my Lord.

F. D'A. That is one reason that disqualifies your speaking for her. There is another. You are yourself accused of heresy, my Lord.

BARON *[falls back into his chair]* Would you repeat that? . . . I? . . . I accused as a heretic? . . . Why, no! . . . *[He breaks into half-hysterical laughter.]* By whom? When? At what place? Caphards! Oh, you must join in my laughter! It's as you said it would be: I dug a pit and here I am and my wife—and how shall we climb out of it? *[to the Needler]* And you—Ah! But I a thousand times more traitor to myself!

F. D'A. Shall I read the accusation?

BARON. What need is there of such formality between us, my Lord Inquisitor? I see now why you arrived in such haste. A day and you were here! I should have known it was not this meager feast that sped you, but the prospect of devouring the entire fief.

F. D'A. Do you confess attacking the Holy Inquisition on the several occasions here noted?

With attention on the Baron, Caphards has slipped through the people, until only Claude and Robin stand

between him and freedom. The Shepherd moves beside him.

CAPHARDS. Stand aside! With your master unmastered, your lives are worthless here. *[The Soldiers realize this both from the shock of losing their patron and from the threatening mien of the people around them. They draw their swords, but in self-defense, and stand so.]* You have done so much here, that this one more thing and you will not escape. Step aside.

F. D'A. *[rising, astounded and outraged]* What! Do you stand there? Seize him! I command you, seize the heretic!

He has included Jeban and the other Soldiers in his order. They look afrightedly at one another and finally make as if to go to their comrades' aid. But the men facing them become a protective, threatening wall, and the soldiers stop uncertainly. Suddenly, the Shepherd kicks the weapon out of Claude's hand. Claude make no motion to recover it as the Mayor steps on it. The Mayor picks it up.

CAPHARDS *[to Robin]* Give him your sword.

Dumbly, Robin hands his weapon to the Shepherd. At the same time, Pierre wrests a sword from one of the soldiers near him and joins Caphards. They face into the hall.

F. D'A. At them! My Lord Baron!

The Baron does not move. Suddenly, the Needler plunges toward Caphards, sword in hand.

NEEDLER. With me, Martin!

But before Martin can make up his mind as to what to do, the Crowd has opened only to swallow up the Needler. When they part, he is seen dead.

CAPHARDS. Come with us, Father Crion.

F. CRION. No, my son. I cannot approve what you are doing.

CAPHARDS. But you will burn!

F. CRION. Only for a little while, Caphards.

CAPHARDS. Come along, Andree. You have suffered enough already, without having to burn for it.

ANDREE. No, Uncle. I must burn for that I lay with Satan. I must have this burned out of me, if I am to live again—if ever I am to see Colas.

CAPHARDS. But you are the last one here to need purification! If you sought the Devil—and you don't know this for certain—you may have dreamed it—

ANDREE. I may have dreamed it. But if it was so?

CAPHARDS. Then you sought the Devil out of very purity and goodness, in rebellion against the Devil's work, against the evil you suffered. God knows your heart. Christ understands what you did. Father, tell her there is no reason for her to die so.

ANDREE *[kneels before F. Crion]* Will Christ see it so? The tears drip on my heart. I repent, I repent me, Father. Can this be enough? Show me a sign. I am still so young and do not want to die.

His tears mingling with hers, F. Crion silently blesses her, kisses her forehead and raises her up. She joins the Mayor.

F. D'A. False priest! You'll answer for this crime.

F. CRION. Oh, Father Inquisitor, how will you answer to Christ for the loss of our little flock? The protesting rise to the south, to the north, to the east, to the west. And here you have loosed four more powerful protestants on the world. You create them, how will you deal with them?

F. D'A. We will burn and burn and burn until there are no more to light a stake. We will have a Christian world!

CAPHARDS. An evil answer, Lord Inquisitor. For authority without justice vanishes; rebellion against injustice, never! Look you: the swords of the castle are passing into the hands of the heath! When the castle burns, the heath and the people will yet remain!

He leaves with his group.

F. D'A. Soldiers of Christ, after them! . . . After them, I command you! . . . You! You, there! . . . On pain of excommunication. . . . [No one stirs.] My Lord Baron, why do you stand so? There's rebellion in your castle. Defend us!

BARON. The castle is yours and the King's, my Lord Inquisitor—and I am already burning at the stake. You have devoured your defender. . . . Take him out. [The Needler is taken off.] The rest of you go to your homes and pray for me and your Lady. And forgive me this evil that so witlessly, and with contrary intent, I brought upon you. Go, now, and fare you all well, my friends. [All go, leaving only the Baron, Helaine, Giles, and the Inquisitor.] My Lord Inquisitor, the Devil has played the devil with you as he has with me. So must the Inquisitor devour the Inquisition.

F. D'A. Not so! The Inquisition will live forever!

[But the Baron's sardonic smile defeats him.] I will await you and my Lady for Boulogne when you are ready. [He goes into the castle.]

BARON [to Giles] Attend him, boy. [Giles turns to obey, but impulsively kneels and kisses the Baron's hand.] Aye. I think now you are older than even you supposed. . . . And so am I. [Close to tears, Giles hurries out.] How shall it be with us now, Helaine?

HELAINÉ. How can it be, as long as my sin to you remains indelible.

BARON. I cannot think what sin you speak of—for my greater sin to you. I have pursued you to our death.

HELAINÉ. How good you are to me.

She places her hands on his shoulders.

BARON. I said once, my hands will never touch you.

HELAINÉ. A dreadful lie.

BARON. But if now they could wrest you from the flame, I would gladly char my soul to eternal hell that you should live.

HELAINÉ. As you well know, I like not living alone.

BARON. We have run out our madness, haven't we? And grace and wisdom—as good comrades often do—have come too late to save us.

HELAINÉ. I am content.

BARON [with a great cry] And I am not! Oh, that we had the wisdom of our years and the years of our youth again! Nay, I shall not make my peace with death. But storm each day to make a year of living with you; and even in our fiery age, the fire in our bones, cry out another moment and another that I might keep you to me another moment yet. . . . Helaine!

He embraces her with remorseful anguish.

Curtain.

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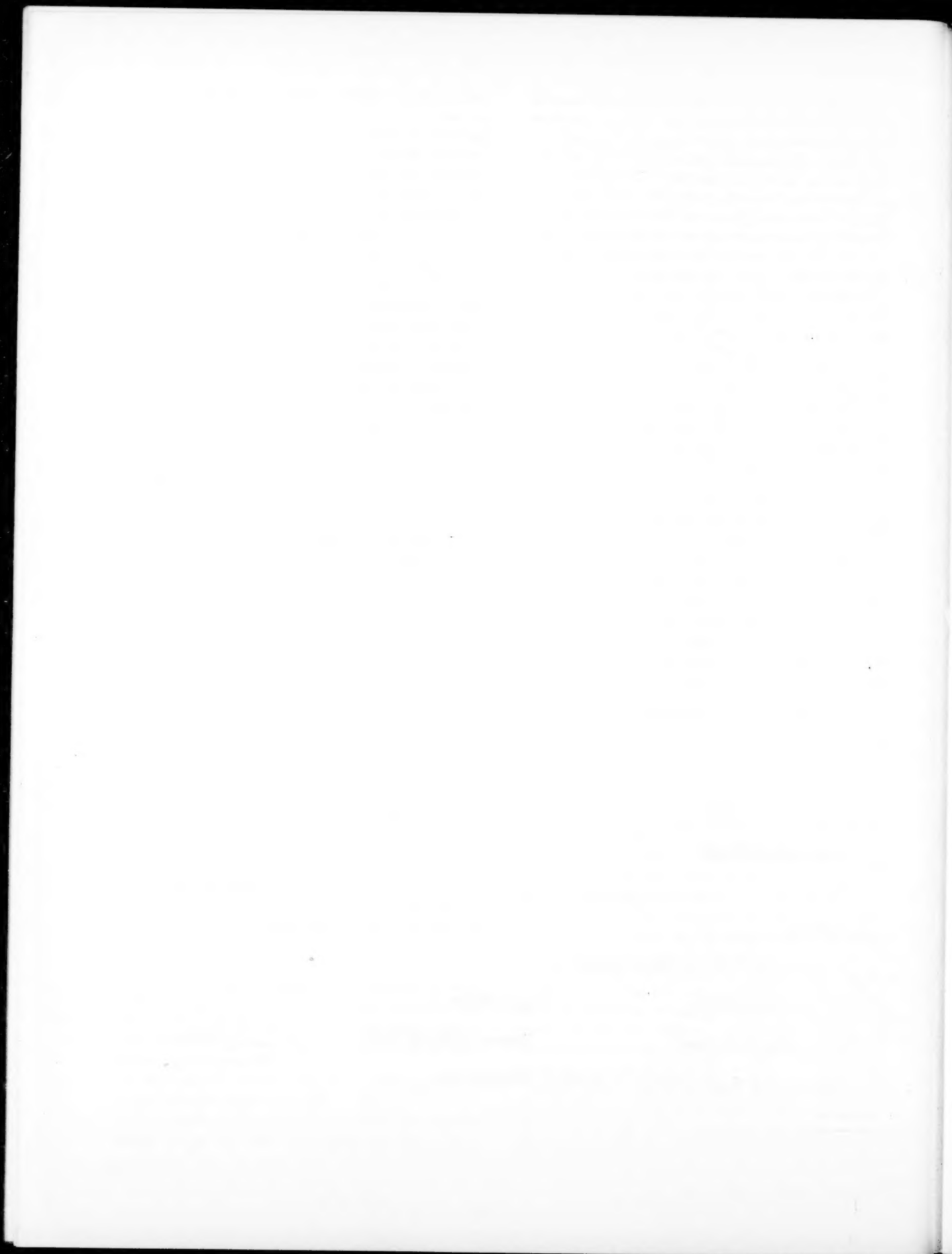
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